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ISSUE 40 CONTENTS

DEEP INSIDE CULT MOVIES.....	5
WE'VE GOT MAIL.....	6
FILM & VIDEO REVIEWS.....	8
BOOK REVIEWS.....	11
DIDN'T YOU USED TO BE ROBERT ARTHUR?...14 by Harold Fairbanks	
VERNE LANGDON: OFF THE CHAIN.....20 by Michael Copner and Coco Kiyonaga	
ARE THE MAD SCIENTISTS, MANIACS, AND MADMEN OF YESTERDAY THE ANCESTORS OF TODAY'S TERRORISTS?.....28 by Jan Alan Henderson	
THE BRODY BUNCH.....34 by Joe Wawrzyniak	
AN INTERVIEW WITH SIDNEY PINK.....40 by David Heyes	
THE NAKED APE: PLAYBOY & UNIVERSAL'S LOST MOVIE.....42 by Ken Brooks	
CAIDIN'S COCKTAIL HOUR.....45 by Eric Celdin	
DEATH COLLECTOR: THE GREATEST LOW-BUDGET SCI-FI FILM NOBODY HAS SEEN/HEARD ABOUT/ DISCOVERED/CELEBRATED.....46 by Mike Malloy	
DRACULA'S COFFIN: THE STORY OF BELA LUGOSI'S STEAMER TRUNK.....50 by Frank J. Dello Stritto	
CONFESSIONS OF A MONSTER BOOMER.....52 by Frank J. Dello Stritto	
LILY MUNSTER: LADY VAMPIRE.....54 by Michael Copner	
JAMES WARREN LIVE!.....55 by Michael Copner	
NEW LIGHT ON DARK EYES OF LONDON, PART II.....60 by Frank J. Dello Stritto & Andi Brooks	

CULT MOVIES

D E E P

I N S I D E

C U L T

M O V I E S

It's true that the Bluest Skies You've Ever Seen are in Seattle. It's just that you can hardly ever see the sky because it's so cloudy all the time.

And it may also be that Chicago is My Kind of Town, even though I Left My Heart in San Francisco. But when it comes down to it, the warmest sentiment ever sung is Hooray For Hollywood.

And that's why we're all here. Our favorite dreams, broken or otherwise, come from Hollywood. For a good deal of the last one hundred years, people outside of America knew us and judged us by the entertainment manufactured in this industry town, the most dazzling suburb Los Angeles or any other city could ever boast. They wanted to come to America because of what they thought it was, what Hollywood taught them it was. FUN was the industry here, friends, and everyone has always wanted a piece of the fashions, innovations, trends and desires churned out by the great dream machine. Hooray for Hollywood.

Celebrities and technologies come and go since there are fashions in both. I'm still reluctant to get rid of my 78 RPM record player, since I'm not sure any of these other technologies are really the coming thing. And to prove a point, although we've had movies for a century or so, "films" as we've known them are about to do a fade out.

Last week I found myself at the Hollywood and Vine Street subway station. What am I doing down here, submerged three levels beneath the streets, loitering deep within the bowels of Hollywood's underbelly? (Please observe the "No Smirking" sign.) For three years since its completion, I've told people offhandedly, "Nobody rides the new subway in Los Angeles. Earthquakes, you know."

Now, with gas prices at an all time high, insurance and parking rates going up, car registration fees about to triple in California, it's about time to try public transportation. And look who's down here with me! Over a hundred people waiting in this gigantic cavern beneath Hollywood, waiting for the underground train which stops by every five or ten minutes. People DO ride the subway; either downtown, or up north to Universal City. This thing is apparently a success.

Suddenly an arresting sight has me hurting with emotion. Overhead, the entire ceiling is decorated with thousands and thousands of 35mm film reels. Plastic and aluminum, twenty-minute storage and shipping reels. All painted a bland tan color, and arranged in a pattern stretching the entire ceiling above the waiting platform from one end to the other.

Magically, before your eyes, these reels, having morphed from functional implements into decorations, transform still again into giant question marks. From which studio or film lab did these reels come? What films USED to be on those reels, and what dare we suspect became of those films as the reels assumed a new function as an art factor?

Considering that the average film is 5 reels long, and the subway ceiling is decorated with two thousand reels (at least!), then it stands that 400 features got discarded to empty those reels and develop them into art-deco designs appealing to the eye and intellect. And breaking to the heart.

Four hundred reels, all un-reeled one final time before becoming antiques, artifacts of a long ago age. We've had film for a hundred years, but digital projection will soon replace film as the new state-of-the-art technology. No more making up expensive prints, and no more expensive shipping and storage of the films after the commercial playdates have lapsed. Film signals will be bounced off satellites to the world's theaters, and movies will be stored on tiny microchips. Theatrical exhibition will begin to resemble a deluxe version of your home entertainment center. Picture and sound problems in the theater of the future? The manager won't call a projectionist to fix the glitch. He'll call a TV repairman.

Fifty years ago TV was The Enemy, and a Hollywood studio might well forbid the employees to even bring a TV set onto the lot, much less be hired to work on a TV show. Now the snake eats its own tail; the cycle has come full circle. Television has become the movies; they're one and the same.

Old studio and theater equipment, such as film reels or the clapperboard used to keep picture and sound synchronized, will linger as identifiable symbols of past technologies. But they'll be as obsolete as the (superior?) optical

methods of production and presentation we've been used to for the past ten decades.

The old Warner Pacific Theater on Hollywood Boulevard, boarded up for nearly ten years, has been the scene of a lot of activity in recent weeks. Word reaches me (and it didn't come via *Filmfax*, so I have every reason to believe it's true) that the Pacific has been the site of a lot of technical experimentation; projectionists of the future working with different focal lengths and aspect ratios, as preparations are made to install video projection systems in all the Pacific movie houses. Other chains will be following the same path.

So, 100 years of films are sent a-reeling down Sunset Boulevard and into the sunset-past from whence they came. We are assured that every last scrap of film footage will be transferred from motion picture film to this new electronic preservation and presentation system. We'll still have the echoes of the past. But film as such will shuffle off to join the Vaudeville shows, the Mighty Wurlitzer Pipe Organs, the 25-cent Saturday matinees, the dusk-til-dawn merriments at the drive-ins, and a thousand other delights left curbside on Memory Lane. And a future generation will not know how a change in mere technology can alter the whole nature of the entertainment at hand.

When the tube-tube meets the shopping mall multiplex. It's an attraction coming soon to every neighborhood near you. And without knowing exactly why, I'm already unhappy about paying to go in and watch a giant video screen. Some people feel the old ways are always the best.

-Michael Copner



WE'VE GOT MAIL!

I picked up my first issue of *Cult Movies* the other day from Tower Records and, man, what a blast! How refreshing it is to read articles by FANS of the genre and not what studios shove down our throats (kinda like *Fangoria* these days).

I absolutely loved [Joe Wawrzyniak's] article on Bigfoot movies. I have most of them on video or DVD and really got a kick out of Mr. Wawrzyniak's obvious love for what he writes about. If he can read this let him know my favorite Bigfoot flick is also *The Creature from Black Lake* and should he EVER wish to do a full length article on this cult classic (especially down here in the south where I saw it as a kid at the drive-in) I have lobby cards and stills that I would be glad to scan and send in. I would love a full article on this great underappreciated movie. Thanks for listening and I look forward to your next issue.

Larry New
from e-mail

Might I say what a comprehensive and informative article on the legendary Sasquatch, a.k.a. Bigfoot, movie arena. I will be sure to peruse it when in search of the next movie on the Mighty Mountain Man.

I would like to add one additional documentary to your exhaustive list of screen screams. Entitled *Sasquatch. Legend Meets Science*, it was produced in 2003 by WhiteWolf Entertainment, Inc. It puts Sasquatch evidence under scientific scrutiny by professors of anthropology and anatomy, forensic investigators, and other field professionals. An engrossing and eye-opening production which sheds new light on our legendary friend, who is getting closer to reality each day. You can learn more about *Sasquatch. Legend Meets Science* at www.legendmeetscience.com.

Thank you for the fine work, as always, and for giving your audience the ability to communicate with you.

Greg Obaguh
from e-mail

Upon its release, *Not of This Earth* (Traci Lords' version) did play for a week at the Ogden 6 Theater in Naperville, a suburb of Chicago. Around this time, other Concorde releases (*Brain Dead*, *Masque of the Red Death*, *Ministry of Vengeance*, *Slumber Party Massacre 3*, *Templeton Blues*) were

receiving token one-week theatrical plays. This was near the end of the tether (unfortunately) for good little "B" pictures to see the light of the projector bulb.

I really liked the Bigfoot article. In 1968, the ABC series *Here Come the Brides* had a (genuinely scary) bigfoot episode too.

Cy Gaffney
Chicago, IL

Lon Chaney, Jr. was one pretty lucky actor. So was his pal, Glenn Strange. This has been observed many times in the pages of *Cult Movies*, and elsewhere, but it's worth mentioning again. Any time the horror genre fell out of favor, as it did from time to time, both these actors could fall back on their roots in the field of Western movies. To me it's amazing that they had this flexibility, in a film industry that probably didn't actually consider these actors to be all that flexible. But somehow, by accident or however, it came to be.

Young Lon made countless Westerns before he became Universal's "Master Character Creator." Also way before he made his great mark on the cinema in *High Noon*. His career MIGHT have taken a very different turn if he hadn't landed that role as Larry Talbot.

Also, Glenn Strange tabulated that he made around 300 of those one hour Westerns for outfits like Monogram, PRC, Grand National, and so forth. Maybe he'll be most remembered by your readers as the most impressive Frankenstein Monster of all time, and maybe for some really bad PRC "thrillers," but it was the Western features and serials, and later TV's *Gunslinger* show, that kept him going for decades.

Don't we all wish Lugosi had been considered that flexible. When horror went out of vogue, Lugosi was often out of work, at the major studios and eventually even the minor ones. The major Hollywood studios eventually even turned their backs on Karloff, although he was saved by immersing himself in television work, and offerings from American International.

Westerns may not be at the peak of popularity now, but I wish you'd cover the work Lon Chaney and Glenn Strange did in that field.

Bill Spencer
Akron, OH



Chaney Jr. gets the girl (below) and Strange gets some strange (top)

John DeChancie's "A Look Back at George Pal's *The Time Machine*" (*Cult Movies* #39) was one of the best pieces on Pal's film that I've read in a long time. It brought back a flood of memories of my first experience with Pal's magic and Rod Taylor's acting.

It was indeed a movie going experience I'll never forget. And DeChancie's fine article helped bring it back into focus. Thanks.

Christopher Schaefer
Long Beach, CA

Michael Copner's reaction to Traci Lords' recent autobiography was quite insightful, not only into the chameleon-like multiple personas of Miss Lords but of Hollywood itself. Copner's mention of seeing the premiere of *Not Of This Earth* with a friend of

CULT MOVIES

his who acted in porno movies seemed so casual that my jaw nearly hit the floor. Where else but in Hollywood can one casually associate with porn actors? I have friends that are attorneys, cops, doctors, construction workers and computer programmers but porn actors? Hollywood truly is a unique place!

As for the articles, John DeChancie's review of George Pal's *The Time Machine* reflected the writer's authentic love for this film and he captures the era in which he first saw it - brilliantly. Forry Ackerman seeing *Metropolis* for the first time, John DeChancie viewing *The Time Machine* for the first time or Yuers Truly seeing *Star Wars* for the first time really got me to thinking that there truly is nothing like viewing a fantastic film and seeing it for the first time at a young age. *Star Wars* came out when I was 12 years old and it obviously wouldn't have had the effect on me or my generation that it did if we had seen it as 22 year olds. I wonder what movies today are having the same kind of impact? I imagine the recent *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* will never be forgotten by the 12 year olds that viewed it this summer. Sometimes we tend to get jaded as adults and put down many of these films because we see them through the accumulated cynicism of our adulthood. Part of the joy of watching any film by George Pal, not just *The Time Machine*, is that Pal had the ability to circumvent our grown-up defenses and appeal to the child-like sense of wonder we all still possess. The genius of George Pal was that he was able to do this without simultaneously insulting our intelligence.

I am definitely purchasing *The Immortal Count: The Life and Films of Bela Lugosi* after Michael Copner's high recommendation. I'm curious to read more of his war record and to know if Prof. Lenning was able to sift out the truth from the hype. I've read that Lugosi was everything from a brave and highly decorated warrior to a deserter! Hopefully this book will answer some questions. On a side note - it just occurred to me as I wrote this that writers from J.R.R. Tolkien to Ernest Hemingway used their combat experiences in World War One to inform their work, as did many actors like Lugosi and directors like James Whale. The men who made *King Kong* were fighter aces! During World War Two directors (John Ford, Sam Fuller, John Huston), actors (Tyroise Power, Clark Gable, Jimmy Stewart) and future actors (Lee Marvin, Neville Brand, Audie Murphy) and innumerable writers saw combat as well. The only modern director I can think of who has seen combat is Oliver Stone. The actor/stunt-man/make-up artist and director - Tom Savini - is a Vietnam veteran also, but not exactly part of the

Hollywood mainstream. How many people in the entertainment industry today, other than technical advisers, have even worn the uniform, let alone been in combat in the first or second Gulf War or the Global War on Terrorism? I would speculate not many and this says volumes about how much the entertainment industry has changed and alienated itself from the mainstream Joe in the heartland. I know that Scott Glenn and R. Lee Erney were in the Marines during Vietnam. After that my mind draws a blank. Is Hollywood that insulated? Just speculating.

David Yuers
from e-mail

I saw the 1963 version of *The Raven* at my local theater when the film was new. Karloff, Peter Lorre, and Vincent Price were all scheduled to make a personal appearance before the film. (Price didn't show). I'll never forget my excitement as Boris and Lorre made their way to the stage. They exchanged a few jokes and told some stories about making the movie. I was only 8 years old, but I'll never forget that day.

A final thought on the *Kane/Raven* theme you've been developing these past few issues. If you watch closely, early on in *Citizen Kane* during the newsreel scene, the narrator goes on about the exotic animal life in Kane's secluded paradise of Xanadu. Among them is an obviously fake octopus. It's a brief scene, so don't blink. Could this be the same rubber monotrocity that turned up years later in *Bride of the Monster*? If so that would give Orson & Bela one more tangible connection.

Loved Tom Weaver's "The Life of Lon." Imagine if Chaney had portrayed some of Gleason's other, more famous characters. Don't laugh. Peter Lorre did a sketch on the Red Skelton Show and played the part of Kramden in a bizarre *Honeymooners* take-off.

In closing, I'd like to share a story I heard the night Frank Sinatra died. Sinatra Jr. appeared on the Tom Snyder Show reminiscing about his father's life. Sinatra and Boris Karloff were neighbors in the early 1950s. They struck up a friendship. This was during a low point in Frank's career, before *From Here to Eternity*. Karloff would give Sinatra acting advice. Once Sinatra complained he didn't have the talent to act. Karloff reassured him, "My boy, you have a wonderful tool - your voice!"

Could Karloff be partly responsible for "The Voice"? Sinatra did change his singing style about that time and who

knows to what degree Karloff had a hand in it?

Bill Allen
Yonkers, NY

[Editor's Reply: The official report has always been that Ed Wood borrowed the octopus for *Bride of the Monster* from Republic Studios, where it was used in a John Wayne film, *Wake of the Red Witch*. But, who knows just how many squidly-diddlies there are in Hollywood? If Ed Wood could borrow it from Republic, maybe they'd borrowed it from RKO where it had done a cameo in *Citizen Kane*.

Hearing the Sinatra/Karloff connection was an uplifting experience. Prior to that I would have thought of Boris' cameo in Nancy Sinatra's *Ghost in the Invisible Bikini*.

Of greater impact was Karloff's 1968 appearance on *The Jonathan Winters Show*. He did a mad doctor sketch with Winters wherein they BOTH sounded exactly like Boris Karloff. After, as an extra treat, Boris recited Frank Sinatra's "It Was a Very Good Year," with a full orchestral back up. After the usual wrap up, Karloff turned, looked directly into the camera and wistfully smiled, "But you know, it's STILL a very good year." It was one of the most graceful and poetic moments on television.

Less than half a year later, Karloff was dead, and many people don't even remember his appearance on the Winters program. But Mr. Winters does. I saw Jonathan Winters at a Ray Courts autograph convention a few months ago, and told him that show was one of my favorite television moments. With a slight tear in his eyes, Winters smiled, nodded his head and said, "Ah, yes. Boris was just a beautiful guy!" I'd love to hear from anyone who has that on video, or could get one from CBS. -Michael Copner]

POST US A LETTER

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Bela Lugosi in *The Invisible Ghost*
(cartoon by Jack Gourlay)

Film, Video & DVD Reviews

RETURN OF THE VAMPIRE

1942, dir. Lew Landers

(Columbia, starring Bela Lugosi)

A movie critic once made a remark about The Three Stooges being "Marx Brothers on the cheap." Any fan of either comedy team can appreciate what that remark means. And it stands that Columbia was a good studio for running other subjects through the recycler once in a while, if Harry Cohn thought he could make a dollar doing it. Here he rummaged through Universal's collection of vampires and werewolves and gave us his rendition, on the cheap.

Writers don't tend to do much on this film, and I certainly don't know why. The other day I put a copy of it in the video machine and intended to watch a few minutes of it while waiting for a phone call. I ended up getting pulled into the movie, the music, the direction, and the overall look somewhere between a Universal and a Monogram film of that same time period. It's virtually a remake of the 1931 *Dracula*, and only slightly a sequel to it. Since Columbia made the film, and Universal owned the screen rights to *Dracula*, this vampire is named Armand Tesla. But he's dressed up to look just like Bela Lugosi, all in evening formal wear, and European sophistication. Bram Stoker's whole story of the undead moving in on a British hospital is kept intact. The Van Helsing type vampire-hunter is transformed into an all-wise WOMAN doctor to keep things interesting, and we are now in contemporary World War II England with Nazi bombs dropping all around. The vampire seems not to notice or care, but is still anxious in seeking young victims.

It seems that Columbia was doing a little cost cutting, in ways that were not so obvious at Universal during this time. Columbia's cemetery sets (rented out at General Service Studios) seem cramped. The writing on this blood sucker is a bit matter-of-fact, whereas the practical writers at Universal had a sense-of-horror about them that enlivened the finished product. The music here is eerie, though not as grand as some of the orchestral master-

works of Hans Sailer.

What's curious is that it took Columbia to revive "Dracula" with Lugosi. And it bugged Universal - who was indifferently casting Lon Chaney and John Carradine in the part around this time. Indeed, plenty of monster juggling went on between these studios, and it may have been activities at Columbia every bit as much as fear of the more intellectual horrors of Robert Wise at RKO, which moved Universal toward the greater and grander monster get-togethers.

In fact, I need to know when Columbia filmed *Return of the Vampire*, for it's said it was held up for release until after Universal played out Chaney's *Son of Dracula*, also in 1943.

Columbia's vampire film included a werewolf, and it's reported that Universal was theorizing doing their own kind of "Dracula Meets the Wolfman" with Lugosi and Chaney as a follow up to *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman*, in 1943. This became *House of Dracula* in 1945, as a follow up to *House of Frankenstein*. There had been plans to feature Lugosi in *House of Frankenstein*, but gave the *Dracula* part to Carradine instead. (Can't you hear the behind-the-scenes negotiations being identical to the ones for *Son of Frankenstein* in 1939? "Offer Lugosi \$500 per week, and shoot all his scenes in one week!" The film plot was designed for such an arrangement, with Carradine killed a reel or two into the film.)

Actually, there was a pre-filming party at Universal with all the cast members present. Lugosi was in attendance for that, and he and Karloff behaved as perfect gentlemen. Some people have reported Chaney as drunkenly out of control, throwing food on or beating up on Evelyn Ankers' husband. The film was made, but Lugosi was not in it. Many people have reported him as "unavailable."

It's possible, since he was doing a lot of stage work, touring with *Dracula* as well as *Arsenic and Old Lace*, for which he was getting critical acclaim. This might have been more satisfying in many ways, than doing a week at Universal for \$500. Truth be known, it may have been the response to his stage tour of *Dracula* which inclined Columbia to virtually remake the film with Lugosi. Columbia

producer Jules White recalls that Universal made some rumblings about a lawsuit over the film, but it came to little and was settled by Columbia loaning out a contract player to Universal for a film.

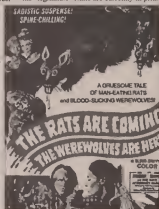
In 1944 a proposed sequel was planned by Columbia, called "Bride of the Vampire", eventually reworked into *Cry of the Werewolf* so as to avoid clashing further with Universal. The only known surviving life-mask of Bela was made during *Return of the Vampire* for the final meltdown scene at the film's end. The mold of the mask is currently property of make-up artist Verne Langdon.

Reviewed by Michael Copner

The Rats Are Coming, The Werewolves Are Here!

1972, dir. Andy Milligan

Andy Milligan was the Grade-Z filmmaking legend who made a series of no-budget horror films in the late '60s and early '70s. He had worked in off-Broadway theater as well, and after a long lay off he returned and made some somewhat sleazier sex movies in the '80s before dying of AIDS in '91. Most of his films were apparently shot in Long Island, NY, though there is some speculation some were made in England. None of his "legitimate" films are currently in print.



CULT MOVIES

although *Something Weird Video* has some of the sex stuff.

The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here! (1972, let us call it *TRACTWAH*) is a representative if somewhat mild Milligan work, maybe his most-seen film. It was on video for a long time with its nicely garish original poster on the video box, screaming as kinetic title. It is interesting that this wild title goes with a rather sedate horror film.

In what seems to be around the 1880s (Milligan, though he had no dough, made period pieces with costumes his fans could follow from one film to the next), a couple returns to the castle home of the bride-to-be. Their future together is mitigated by the genetic affliction of the family (explored in a series of endlessly talky scenes dancing around the rather obvious nature of the problem). Suffice it to say, the film resurrects the legend that the werewolf is only vulnerable to a silver bullet "fired by the one who loves you," which I believe was unknown beyond the realm of *House of Dracula*.

Milligan certainly had his own approach, not without ambition and commitment. *TRACTWAH* has allusions to Shakespeare, Dickens, even O'Neill. In fact,

it plays like a "Long Day's Journey into Schlock." Commendably, the film's soundtrack seems recorded entirely live, unusual in filmmaking this low budget. What makes it watchable, however, are the committed performances he gets from his no-name cast. The give themselves fully to the mountains of absurd gibberish, something like the actors in an early John Waters film.

Surprisingly void of gore; only the off-putting death of a real mouse leaves an unpleasant aftertaste. *TRACTWAH* is an unusual film, maybe even for Milligan.

Reviewed by Greg Wall

Ghost Ship

2002, dir. Steve Beck

Much better than I thought it would be, with one of the downright nastiest mass death scenes EVER put in a movie. And that scene is in the first five minutes! They not only show this once, but twice!

A salvage boat, captained by Gabriel Byrne, discovers a long-lost luxury liner from the '60s. The man who told them about this is a pilot, who had seen it from the air. They find the ship, board it, and soon all the salvage

crew start seeing ghostly apparitions. All but one of them is malevolent, the ghost of a ten-year-old girl, who tries to warn them of danger. But what exactly is that danger? It was kind of obvious what was going to happen to most of the characters, but the ending of the film did surprise me. I did not see it coming. Although not as creepy as *Death Ship* from the 1980s, this one is worth seeing.

Reviewed by Kevin Lindenmuth

The Doll Squad

1973, dir. Tod V. Mikels

(starring Michael Ansara, Francine York)

Could Michael Ansara have needed a paycheck this desperately? On television he ruled in westerns like *Broken Arrow* and later in *Law of the Plainsmen*. Maybe he didn't need that much cash, since he doesn't appear until about thirty minutes into this sad sister of a movie. The ball is carried by carried by Francine York, a hot and foxy young honey who's probably carried the ball for lots of men in the movies. She's every bit as dramatic as Mr. Ansara, and they may both feel at home in this feature very much inspired by TV's *Mod Squad*, with a tale about an ex-Ben Laden made man out to

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Book Reviews

Monte Hellman: His Life and Films

by Brad Stevens, foreword by Monte Hellman,
2003, McFarland & Company, 212 pages

Best known for his terse, existential films *The Shooting* (1966) and *Two-Lane Blacktop* (1971) (and for the equally excellent but less existential *Ride in the Whirlwind* [1966] and *Cockfighter* [1973]), director Monte Hellman seems to have always had a fan following — however "cult" and underground. But now he's being rediscovered. Attribute it to the broader revival of '70s Cinema Realism through recent documentaries like *A Decade Under the Influence*. Or chalk it up to Hellman endorsements and fawnings from such celebrities as Richard Linklater. Or credit the rediscovery to the fact that much of Hellman's work has become available on DVD (including *Blacktop*, whose video release was held up for decades because of music rights non-clearance).

And with these Hellman DVDs come some fine director's commentaries that detail the production histories of his movies. So some of the anecdotes related in Brad Stevens' Hellman biography will seem familiar to the director's devotees. But Hellman hasn't managed to be a particularly prolific director; in his 40+ years in Hollywood, he's the credited director of only ten features. So Stevens' book is invaluable in accounting for the rest of the director's career, using the author's many e-mails with Hellman as an excellent first-hand source. Stevens documents Hellman's many (and often abortive) "in-between" projects. In fact, the book has four chapters entitled "In Between Projects."

If Hellman wasn't belting a feature, he was busy in other capacities. He edited Peckinpah's *The Killer Elite*, executive produced Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs*, and directed a prologue sequence for the TV version of Leone's *A Fistful of Dollars*.

And Hellman seemed to fill the rest of his time declaiming film offers (*The Last Picture Show*, *Fistful of Dynamite*, *Junior Bonner*), working on film projects that would eventually be made by another (Logan's *Run*, Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid), being replaced as director during a film's development (*Buffalo '66*, *Reservoir Dogs*), being replaced as a director during production (*Shatner*, an episode of TV's *Barenza*), and developing projects that have, to date, gone unfilmed (*The Payoff*, *Freaky Deaky*).

So, yes, thanks to the sharply-written *Monte Hellman: His Life and Films* we know the stories of the films that Hellman didn't make are just as interesting as the stories of the films Hellman did make. If the book has a fault, it's that author Stevens seems overly concerned with finding running themes through the director's body of work. But that's only if the book has a fault.

Available from McFarland & Company
(www.mcfarlandpub.com).

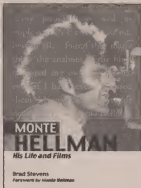
Reviewed by Mike Malloy

The Mummy Unwrapped: Scenes Left on Universal's Cutting Room Floor

by Thomas M. Ferasisco, McFarland & Company, 232 pages including index, with 30 photos

For all the Universal Horror aficionados, *The Mummy Unwrapped*, written by truly enthusiastic, die-hard fan Thomas Ferasisco, encompasses the four mummy movies made in the early 1940s, but not Boris Karloff's classic original which began mummy mania back in 1932. Neither does it include the Brit's foray into Egyptian creepiness undertaken by Hammer Films in the 1950s and '60s.

Instead, Mr. Ferasisco presents his research; deleted script pages; and scenes cut from the series of four films: *The Mummy's Hand*, *The Mummy's Tomb*, *The Mummy's Ghost*, and *The Mummy's Curse*. In addition there's an unmade treatment for *The Mummy's Return* which evolved into *The Mummy's Curse*, as well as bios on the leading actors, actresses, featured players, and crew.



Mr. Ferasisco's love of his subject is evident and this book is to be commended for including directors, composers, and make-up men in the "behind the scenes" section. Because they toiled in the low-budget horror genre at the studio that was called "Devil's Island," these people have been long neglected and are now forgotten. In particular, it's refreshing to see composer Hans Sälter get his due. But I wish make-up genius Jack Pierce had been allotted more than one page.

That said, there is an inherent danger when doing a book of this sort so many years after so many people have died with no opportunity to interview the subjects personally. Errors and omissions slip by due to information being second and third hand that varies in dependability. For that reason the toos must be taken with a grain of salt. Example: When it comes to information on Lon Chaney, Sr., Hollywood has its leading living biographer within its borders — Emmy-winning make-up expert Michael F. Blake. (Blake has published no less than three books on the subject of Chaney Sr.'s life and career). Misinformation abounds in *The Mummy Unwrapped* despite

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the fact that writer Feramisco lives within 15 miles of Mr. Blake, who could have easily confirmed or corrected facts about Chaney's cause of death; date of death (Aug. 26, not Aug. 30, 1930); as well as put to rest the tall tale of Chaney Jr.'s birth. Equally important, the facts need to be filled in regarding Chaney Jr.'s serious allegations of father abuse. (Michael Blake has pointed out that this started only when Jr. was middle aged and deeply in the clutches of alcoholism.)

Thomas Feramisco lists a bibliography at the back of his book that is bereft of serious scholarly work on movie history, but lists studio publicity department issued bios from the 1940s along with trade paper and magazine articles.

Let anyone think that the fault is only with Lon Chaney Jr.'s chapter, the one on actor Peter Coe has some oversights. The last High Priest in the last mummy movie (*The Mummy's Curse*), Coe's movie credit list includes *The Ten Commandments* (where he appears for 30 seconds and has no lines) but omits films like *The Egyptian* and *The Story of Ruth* where he had whole scenes and dialogue. Another omission is the listing of Coe's surviving sons, but not daughters (!), along with the sweeping statement that it is "acknowledged that he was one of the nicest guys in Hollywood."

Who said Coe was nice? And when? The writer doesn't say. It's clear that Feramisco didn't even log onto the Peter Coe website. If he had he would have read Peter Jr.'s honest comments on his father and corrected his research. Or he could have even read past issues of *Cult Movies* magazine where very interesting articles and Coe interviews were printed while the man was alive.

There are other instances too numerous to go into here. But the point is made that without any personal one-on-one interviews with either the chapter subjects, or friends, or family egregious facts, dates, stories abound. The argument can be made that a book about B-Horror movies shouldn't be taken too seriously. But the author thought it was serious enough to write a book about it. And he should have taken a researcher's care in double-checking details and seeking out more than one source for the related facts.

Reviewed by Katherine Orrison

Retro Stud: Muscle Movie Posters From Around the World

by David Chapman, 128 pages, hardback, full color, \$16.95, Collectors Press, PO Box 230986, Portland, OR 97221, 503-684-3030

I don't remember my old home town of Seattle being a "surging spectacle of savagery and sex." But, it's true, you CAN get a good cup of coffee there. David Chapman, a sports and entertainment writer who lives there, has also

gathered a fantastic collection of old Sword and Sandal movie posters, and displays them in full color in this absorbing new book.

Movie poster books are easy to do, because all you have to do is show a bunch of posters. But this genre is a bit tricky, because these films – most produced in Italy – showed in theaters virtually all over the world. So, David Chapman had to do a little extra research and planning when he made up the blueprint for this book. He's divided the book into chapters by country, then gives a caption to virtually every movie poster shown. He also has some overall observations that are helpful to the reader. In the chapter devoted to Spain, Chapman states, "Artistry and visual stimulation are apparent in the Spanish posters. Many of these were used throughout the Hispanic world, so they had to

communicate to many cultures. Their brilliant designs often belie their relatively modest size." (They are 27 x 39 inches, as compared to American one-sheets which have always been a bit larger.) Samson, Hercules, and the rest are shown in chapters devoted to France, Italy, Belgium, Germany, Turkey, and America – and sometimes the posters show drastically different artwork in the various countries. It's enthralling to compare them.

Readers familiar with the genre will spot the title changes from one country to another, and also the occasional alteration of the name of an actor! All the great ones are here; Brad Harris, Steve Reeves, Mark Forrest, and so on. All shown in sly sexuality and lithographed excitement in these not-to-be-forgotten muscle epics.

Reviewed by Michael Copner

Monster Kid Memories

by Bob Burns as told to Tom Weaver, DinoShip Press 2003

In 2000, Bob Burns in partnership with John Michlig published *It Came From Bob's Basement* (Chronicle Books), a wonderful tribute to Bob and his collection, and his life. This high art coffee table book is a fine full color and black and white representation of all of Bob's magical mementos. It continues to sell well, and is a must for anyone who is interested in all things Burns.



But lo and behold, three years later, Bob and frequent *Cult Movies* contributor Tom Weaver have teamed up for a more in-depth march down Bob Burns' monster movie lane. Bob has always been the king cool of monsters, and within these pages of *Monster Kid Memories* we get the full and complete stories of Bob's adventures in the horror capital of the world.

Topics touched on in *It Came From Bob's Basement* are presented here in the depth that Bob experienced them. His friendships and encounters with Republic bad guy Roy Barcroft, ace stunt man David Sharpe, Glenn Strange, Lon Chaney, Jr., Boris Karloff, Elsa Lanchester, and George Pal are all revealed here for the first time in their entirety. Also included are Bob's tributes to makeup master Jack Pierce and ape man Charlie Gemoni. His adventures on

Shock Theater in Texas, carousing with William Castle, creating his signature character Major Mars, and giving fandom one of the most highly regarded monster magazines, *Fantastic Monsters of the Films*, affectionately known as "Fan-Mo" are chronicled as well.

Tom Weaver captures every nuance of Bob's journey through the Hollywood catcombs, including his feelings of elation meeting his heroes, and the heart-wrenching process of saying good-bye to his heroes who had become personal friends.

This is a highly touching account of a man who has been a staple of monsterdom since the word "cool" was invented. With a forward by Leonard Maltin and introduction by famed horror director Joe Dante, this book is a must read for anyone who is interested in Bob or his endeavors. Richly illustrated with photos from Bob's personal archives, this book is the stuff nightmares are made of.

Reviewed by Jan Alan Henderson

CULT MOVIES



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The Utopian Nightmare

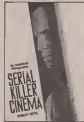
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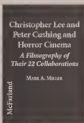
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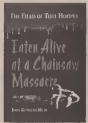
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McFARLAND

DIDN'T•YOU•USED•TO•BE...



ROBERT•ARTHUR



*Actor Robert Arthur speaks about being gay in 1940s and '50s Hollywood
and how the experience affected his later life*

SPECIAL•ARTICLE•BY•HAROLD•FAIRBANKS

"When I was ten years old, I had these fears the boy next door was much too attractive. Even one of my best friends gave me heart palpitations, which I didn't understand at all. Every time I heard his Model A coming down the street I had these seizures, but I didn't know what they were exactly. Then I looked up a description of myself in Havelock-Ellis and thought, 'Oh my God! I must be that!'"

And that's how young Bobby Arthur learned he was gay, back in 1935 in Aberdeen, Washington. His father was a farmer who went into real estate and the insurance business. "Looking back, I guess even my father was alarmed about me. I was expected to take over the family business and pass it on to my children. He wanted me to play with toy guns or a football but would come home to find me sewing dresses on puppets in the basement. I'm sure it was a blow."

Little Bobby grew up and became movie star Robert Arthur. He rose to the heights, then sank to the depths and survived to become a contented, successful businessman. His story is the kind of drama that makes good movies, in fact it parallels the life of the late singer Lillian Roth, which was filmed in 1955 with Susan Hayward and called *I'll Cry Tomorrow*. Though meaty entertainment for the masses (Hayward received an Oscar nomination for her gutsy portrayal of Roth), that sort of emotional devastation is not much fun when you actually live it, and in Robert Arthur's case, the added complication of his homosexuality made it even more traumatic.

When this interview was conducted, Arthur was sitting in the tastefully decorated living room of his townhouse in Encino, California, a Los Angeles suburb. It was right around the corner from his office on Ventura Boulevard, where he sold insurance to a 98% gay clientele. "We have a joke in my office," he laughed. "We will accept non-gay business and will not discriminate against them, but they have to behave themselves." Even being in the insurance business was quite a paradox. "When my father sold insurance, that's all he used to talk about. Both my grandfathers sold insurance too. That's why I vowed I would never sell insurance and one of the reasons I wanted to get out of Aberdeen, but there I was years later, selling insurance to gay people. It amazed me. I guess it's in the blood."

But insurance wasn't the only thing in

his blood. At one time alcohol was too. Fluctuations in his movie career and mental torment over his repressed homosexuality drove Robert Arthur to the bottle. Now completely dry, and proud of the fact he hadn't had a drink for eleven years, he showed little physical damage from those tormented alcoholic years. Still trim and boyish looking, with just a touch of gray streaking his brown hair, his blue eyes twinkle somewhat ruefully when describing his fifteen year movie career playing "the world's oldest living juvenile."

Bob traces his interest in show business back to the days at Weatherwax High School in Aberdeen. "I had built a very elaborate puppet show, with full size sets they are still using, even to this day. Then, at fourteen, I won a radio announcers contest. The prize was a job on the local station and \$100 in clothing. My first program was 'The Doodlebug Hour' - a very classy show - and I graduated to opening the transmitter in the morning, playing 'The Star Spangled Banner' and starting the day with 'The Bluebird of Happiness.' I worked at the station until graduation, then joined the naval training program at the University of Washington so I wouldn't be drafted. Can you imagine that the Navy was like for a person trying to hide their homosexuality? I had hoped it would make a man of me, but I fell in love with another sailor the first day I was in the service and became very confused. So I had what they called a nervous breakdown over him, which should have indicated there was something different about me. I knew there was something different from the minute I saw him!"

"When I was discharged in 1944, I couldn't get out of Washington fast enough! I came to Hollywood on a one-way train ticket because I had a letter of introduction to a children's talent agent from a Paramount makeup man I met in the Navy. He told me, 'If you ever get to Hollywood, look up Lola Moore.' The second day I was in town, I was walking around the neighborhood near the Pantages Theatre, knocking on doors asking people if they had a room for rent. That's how I met Pearl Early, a marvelous heavy-set woman and former vaudevilian, who lived at the corner of Gower and Carlos Streets. It was Pearl who took me to her agent, who I arrogantly told that I would consider a motion picture career if they would hurry up about it. I had no money left."

"Well, it worked. I took three drama

lessons from coach Ruth Robinson, all in one afternoon, and worked up a short comedy scene. It was between a boy and a girl in an ice cream parlor and I played both parts. That should have given everybody a clue to my sexuality, but it didn't. I was sent over to Sophie Rosenstein and Solly Bianco in the talent department at Warner Bros. and they took me down to see director Michael Curtiz. He handed me a script and told me to act 'tragique.' He said, 'You must crack-toe their hearts,' so I thought of my dog dying, cried on cue and they gave me a role in *Roughly Speaking* the same day.

"That first day of shooting, after work I was standing at the bus stop outside the studio, having played Rosalind Russell's youngest son going off to war all day. She came through the gate in her Darien Packard convertible, asked me if I'd like a ride home and drove me back to Pearl's house in Hollywood, saying, 'I'll see you tomorrow.' So I was under contract to Warner Bros. twelve days after I arrived at Union Station in downtown Los Angeles, not knowing a soul. And I lived with Pearl for two years, in a room that cost \$8 a week, including breakfast."

"That began my career as everybody's son. I was Russell's son, Charles Boyer's son, Bing Crosby's son, Frank Lovejoy's son, Kent Smith's son, Rosemary DeCamp's son, even Myrna Loy's son. I was a juvenile for fifteen years beginning at age nineteen. If I so much as saw a hairline shadow under one eye I freaked, because my competition was the real juveniles coming out of New York City. It was getting harder to wake up bright eyed and bushy tailed in the morning. There's something sort of depressing about an ageing juvenile, but I had been typecast. I never graduated into leading man roles. Even when I did *The System* at Warner Bros. in 1953, I was playing somebody nineteen."

"And let's face it, some of the movie parts I did, the dialog was pretty bad. It was kind of hard for me to have too much respect for those pictures. When you've got lines like 'Gee, Marge, you turn my heart to hamburger,' it's awfully hard to do much with them. They don't leap right off the page. I never even got out of the country on interesting locations. I always went to places you would choose not to go on any travel itinerary - Death Valley in the middle of summer, Gallop, New Mexico during the windstorms and the like. At least, near the end of my career when I was doing live television, it was fun because you could start and end a script in the same day. You could actually perform in some continuity. It was very gratifying; I enjoyed television. There was no standing around all day waiting for Thunderhead's eyes to light up."

"Still, when I was beginning in movies, screwy things happened to me because I

(clockwise from top left) Bob Arthur and Elyse Knox in *Sweetheart of Sigma Chi*; Arthur in his first film, 1945's *Roughly Speaking*, with Jack Carson and Rosalind Russell; a recent photo, holding an award for Best Actor in a Non-Sexual Role at the GPAA; at a 1981 senior gay and lesbian event in L.A.

didn't know any better. In 1946 I did a wonderful, wonderful film for Monogram that I laugh about. It was called *Swearheart* of Sigma Chi, with Ross Hunter and Elyse Knox. I played - now get this right - a cockswain on a college rowing crew. I knew nothing about being a cockswain; I had led to get the job. The first day of shooting, instead of steering the scull to where we were supposed to turn around and dock it, I put my foot right through the thing and we sank as we left the shore. Ross Hunter was shouting that he couldn't swim. Alan Hale, Jr. was capsizeing and I was yelling 'stroke' as we sank in Balboa Bay with five cameras filming it. But Alan got his revenge. In another scene he was supposed to pick me up and say, 'Why you little so and so,' and throw me to the ground. They had a mattress for me to land on but he missed it and I hit the hood of a car. In the film you see me bouncing right back into the scene holding my stomach and yelling 'ooowww' over the following dialog. That was Monogram for you. They used everything, didn't cut a thing.

"Then I did a film for Producers Releasing Corporation (PRC) called *Devil on Wheels* with Darryl Hackman and I literally broke the camera. The script said 'Todd gets in his hot rod and burns rubber.' Well, I didn't know what a hot rod was and I didn't know what burning rubber meant either. So they told me to gun the motor and drive off. I did as they said and roared off in this incredible car, throwing rocks into the camera lens, which broke it. We were on location and they had to send into Hollywood for another camera and it held up production a half day.

"I even did one picture with Ronald Reagan and Nancy Davis (Reagan) called *Helcats of the Navy* for Columbia. There was a birthday scene on the ship. The crew gave me a party and I threw the cake at Reagan and hit him in the face. It was wonderful! To think I was throwing a cake at the President of the United States! Of course, if anybody had said to me that he was going to be the Governor of California, I would have found that a little far-fetched, but for him to be our President really amazed me. I don't think he thought along those lines back in those days. I found him to be a very nice man, rather formal and dignified and a little bit uncomfortable. Well, how much comfort could you find doing something like *Helcats of the Navy*? That was before he was married to Nancy. And I don't think Ronald Reagan sent out any gay signals!

"I certainly did though, when I made *Young Bess* at MGM. It was a costume picture about young Queen Elizabeth, but shot on sound stages at the studio in Culver City, so there went my chance of traveling to England. I was one of the few American

actors in the cast, and their dialog coach Gertrude Fougler had to teach me how to do a British accent. I looked so silly in those tights. I called it my first bisexual role because I had a crush on Stewart Granger and a love scene with Jean Simmons and I didn't know whether I was coming or going!

Being a gay movie actor, and confused about his sexual identity as well, made this period very difficult for Bob Arthur. It was during the era of powerful gossip columnists and romances manufactured by studio publicity departments for planting in the proliferation of shallow fan magazines. Hedda Hopper and Louella O. Parsons ruled Hollywood from their positions as syndicated newspaper writers. Bob recalled his relationship with them.

"I liked both Hedda and Louella. They were honest, hard-working reporters, simply products of their own culture. Hedda was very sincere in her beliefs, even though I think she was misguided in many of her concepts of right and wrong. God knows why they were powerful, and I don't think either of them came from a background that even allowed for the idea of homosexuality. Perhaps Louella would be considered slightly liberal but Hedda was a real right-winger. Let's face it, Louella was a Hearst employee and you couldn't afford to be too right-wing around William Randolph Hearst.

"When I did *Green Grass of Wyoming* at Fox in 1948, I got a call from Louella's office saying she would like to do a feature story on me for the Sunday rosette magazine supplement of the *Los Angeles Examiner*. I was to meet her at the Brown Derby in Hollywood on what happened to be my 21st birthday to do the interview. I was ushered into the restaurant's private dining room and found to my horror that she was utterly plastered! Anyway, she was very pleasant, and asked me what I wanted for lunch in a very slurred voice, and when I blurted out that it was my birthday she told the waiter to bring me some ice cream and cake. So I had that for my lunch and she had more to drink and the interview began. 'Wear you flurim,' she said, and I told her, 'You like it here?' Well, about that time I thought to myself, forget it, wouldn't you know it, just my luck she's in her cups. We continued talking, she asked me questions and seemed to be interested, but her words were getting thicker and thicker. Finally she said 'Waahlgottogobomenow' and that was the end of it. I thought I'd never see that interview in print. She didn't take notes or anything. Lo and behold, I opened up the *Examiner* a couple Sundays later and everything I had said, word for word, was in the article and, what's more, accurate! She had a tape recorder for a brain. I was astounded.

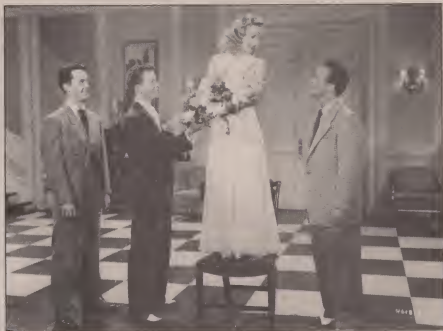
"My brush with Hedda Hopper was

rather different. In 1957, after I had been playing juveniles for some thirteen years, my agent asked if I would consider doing a comedy role as a homosexual gangster in a Roger Corman picture called *Machine Gun Kelly* with Charles Bronson as Kelly. It was a very funny bit where I drove the getaway car. I took the part because this would certainly change my boy next door image, a real departure.

"So I called Hedda and told her about this stroke of luck, what a great chance it was for me. Well, she listened very quietly and the next day, in the *Los Angeles Times*, I read to my horror that she was 'shocked to hear that Bobby Arthur has agreed to play this degenerate person. What will his mother and father in the State of Washington think? What will his fans think? I can't imagine why he would do this to himself. Hopefully he will come to his senses and reconsider before his career is ruined.' So I called her and said, 'Hedda, how can you do this to me?' And she told me that I'd made a terrible career decision but if I'd withdrawn from the film she would print a retraction in the column that I had come to my senses. In those days a woman like Hedda Hopper could make or break a career, so I bowed to her, called Roger Corman and told him I wouldn't do the picture. He was furious with me for not standing up for what I believed in, and rightly so.

"But there could be a lighter side to these columnists too. Besides Hedda and Louella there was also Sheila Graham, but she wasn't as powerful. I can remember Sheila racing up to Tyrone Power at a party, saying 'Ty, darling, what did you DO last night?' He turned to her and said, 'Sheilah, I fucked ALL night.' It was so stunning to have someone say that to a columnist, especially him. Naturally it stopped the conversation cold.

"Aside from powerful lady writers, we also had the muckraking magazine called *Confidential* to worry about. Many careers were ruined before it was put out of business. Luckily, I wasn't important enough to attract their attention but even so, there was a lot of talk back in those days of homosexual blackmail, which you almost never hear of anymore. People were paid off to keep quiet. I was blackmailed once and it was a frightening experience, to think that everything would be gone if I was found out. I finally had the courage to go to the District Attorney, after a lot of psychological pain. There was a trial and I had to appear as a witness in court. The defense attorney really grilled me about my homosexuality and it was a terribly embarrassing scene. That kind of thing probably wouldn't happen today, but remember, this was the 1950s and I was established in the industry. At least homo-



(left to right) David Holt, Robert Arthur, Elyse Knox, and unidentified male in *Sweetheart of Sigma Chi* (1946)

sexual blackmail, even at that time, was viewed by the police as a serious crime and they were very aware how much it was used. In my case the District Attorney was marvelous. The incident was never publicized.

"There was a lot of guilt connected with my sex life in those days. The affairs I had were conducted in secret and, I must admit, in shame. I went to psychologists and psychiatrists and was one of the first people they experimented on with LSD treatments to try breaking down the subconscious barrier to my repressed homosexuality. You know, at the doctor's office they played music to get the patient in the mood, and instead of asking to hear something by Wagner, which was supposed to arouse my feelings for a female, I pleaded with them to play "Madame Butterfly." That should have given them some kind of clue!

"All the young male performers in the limelight, which I was at that time, were expected to date girls. Anyone who was gay hid it. The image built up by the studio publicity department was designed to make you appealing to the fan magazines and the public. Certainly the public would not have

accepted homosexuality. I dated Wanda Hendrix for several years and we'd go to these pre-arranged photo sessions as a couple, then bid goodbye and that was that. How confused the women must have been, but I dare say some of that subterfuge went on with them too, though I didn't recognize it at the time. But at the lovely parties photographed for *Modern Screen* and for *Photoplay*, with the boys and girls holding hands for the cameras, I know that many of the boys left with each other and went to a different location to spend the night. Naturally it was never talked about, especially since those involved were big stars. Not every male star was gay, but there was a gay element that was hidden and for a very good reason. It would have ruined careers.

"If you met someone that was well known, they would give you a kind of signal that they wanted to know you better. But anything as overt as a kiss on the cheek or a fond pat in public was shunned. I can remember passing a little note to somebody asking them if they were free on Friday night or would they have dinner with me, or I had a movie I thought they would like to see in my home.

"You didn't even talk about being gay with another person. There was an inner circle of gays on each studio lot that knew about each other, but they didn't relate. Nobody wanted to risk having their reputation soiled. Some people were considered eccentric or sensitive, such as Clifton Webb and Edward Everett Horton for instance. But even Franklin Pangborn was never described as gay, although there couldn't have been anyone more so. He was considered a funny character. If men had relationships they did it out of town, hoping to God no one knew who they were. It was very secret. I went to San Francisco or even farther to let my hair down.

"I'm pretty sure a great many people knew I was gay, but it was never common knowledge. I think I suffered some because I always felt I had to put on an act, pretending I was something I wasn't. That can make a very lonely life.

"I knew a number of top stars that felt that way. I think it's true about being very lonely at the top. When I was under contract to Fox and going to Helena Burrell's acting class - their drama coach on the lot - there



CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN II: The movie family in *Bees on their Toes*, the 1952 sequel to *Cheaper by the Dozen*, including Debra Paget (middle row, far right), Robert Arthur (top row, second from left), and Myrna Loy (top row, far right)

was a girl they had just signed in the same class. She later became their internationally known sex symbol Marilyn Monroe, but back then we were just two kids doing these one-act plays and putting them on in director Howard Hawks' barn up in Bel Air. The idea was that you got together and did these little plays for him, then some people stayed after and had an orgy. I was really terribly curious about this but wouldn't admit it, so in my prudish fashion simply left the barn and went home. Marilyn also felt the same way, although it was fairly well known that she had a number of affairs with producers and directors. Still, she would not stoop so low as to be in an orgy.

"Anyway, one night I got a call from her at around two in the morning. She only lived a few blocks away. And she tells me, 'You know, I'm very upset about this class. Why don't you come down and talk to me about it. I have some wine here and if you're not working tomorrow, I'd really appreciate

your coming over and visiting.' So I went down and we got plastered on wine and started racing around the house like two kids. We even made popcorn and waffles! Then she said, 'Oh, I know what let's do. Let's take a Bubble Bath.' That sounded like great fun so we took our clothes off and got in this big tub full of bubbles and played around in the suds. Then she stood up – and she had a magnificent figure with great breasts and hips – and started doing one of her seductive dances with the soap bubbles and stroking her body. And she says, 'You know, Bobby, I just don't see what everybody sees in all this.' I was busy playing with the bubbles and so I said, 'I don't know dear. It beats me.' To the average healthy young male that would have been the come-on of all time, but I was totally immune to it. She accepted that and, even though we both were still very plastered, we thought it was very funny. I can even remember another time a famous star, a really great lady, told me 'I'd take you to bed

with me but it wouldn't help.'

"This double life, this deception that I led – or so I thought! Alcohol was the great social lubricator then. You could go to a party at a very beautiful home and the first thing that happened was you were offered a stiff drink. If it was going to be one of those secret meetings of a bunch of gays, it was important that everybody's fears and inhibitions were dulled so you could actually have a clandestine affair and get to it as quickly as possible. I did get to know some very famous people very quickly by having a lot of very fast drinks." Bob Arthur laughs, thinking of it now, but in the 1940s and 50s, that was gay Hollywood.

He had appeared in 36 major movies in either a featured or starring role, done a complete range of live and filmed television shows and even some occasional ventures into summer stock stage offerings, when he left show business in 1958. The Screen Actors Guild strike in 1956 had changed the way Hollywood conducted business. Contract players were dismissed, the star system was fading and there was no great demand for ageing juveniles. It was an unstable time for Arthur, as well as the industry.

He opened a 'gift shoppe' in the Crenshaw Shopping Center. "What else does a gay person do?," Arthur muses. I sold greeting cards, pastries, and coffee, Royal Dalton figurines – all the things I liked – only I didn't know I couldn't make any money doing that. Then I operated a home owners referral business that catered to the stars, and had a vitamin and minerals franchise. They all failed. I had left the film business voluntarily and in pretty good shape financially, but I lost it all and was forced into bankruptcy for four and a half years starting in 1965." By his own admission he became so offensive from constantly being drunk that his friends finally gave up on him. Bob Arthur had reached rock bottom.

"My alcoholism had reached a point where I had some serious auto accidents, including running the steering wheel of my car through my stomach, was in a hospital for six months and nearly died. I set fire to my apartment, burned all my hair off and tried suicide three times. Yet my situation was not unique. So many people that were gay had nowhere to go when their careers ended. They had no value system to live with comfortably so they went into drugs and alcohol. I finally got to the point where I went downtown to skid row and lived at the Salvation Army's Harbor Lights Mission. I didn't have a dime. Many people tried to help me – my parents, my gay and non-gay friends – but I was determined to destroy myself. I very much disliked what I was, a has-been actor and a gay person with no self-respect. I didn't want to be gay. I

hated the way my career ended, a man I had loved very much died tragically and I thought God had dealt me a lousy hand.

"Finally, in 1969, my father had me declared insane from the disease of alcoholism and committed to the mental hospital at Camarillo, California for a six week internment. I can remember being in an open ward where the patients were allowed to watch television. One day *Roughly Speaking* was on the tube. There I was in my pajamas and little robe, sixty other insane men and myself watching me in my first film. Quite a downhill slide from 25 years before.

"When I was released from Camarillo, I tried to revive my life, but I was still drinking. I got a job selling insurance, but trying to relate to normal families was a terribly difficult process for me. It's not real easy going on new baby leads when you've had one too many. One of my first life insurance sales interviews was at an apartment in West Covina and when I walked in *Ace in the Hole* was showing on television. Wouldn't you know it, at that very moment the scene came on with Kirk Douglas and myself at the newspaper office in New Mexico. I look up at him and say, 'What are you doing here? Selling life insurance?' Well, there was a little boy sitting on the sofa watching the movie and I went into the kitchen with his mother and father to sell them their life insurance. Pretty soon the boy comes in and says to me, 'You know, that guy on TV looks exactly like you.' I tried to ignore him but a few minutes later he says, 'He even sounds like you.' So finally I said, 'Alright, it is me.' And the kid says, 'Then what are you doing selling life insurance?' It was one of the most depressing moments of my life.

"It wasn't until I began to change my opinion of myself, face my conflict over being gay and desperately wanting to rehabilitate my life that things happened for the better. Actress Mercedes McCambridge, a recovered alcoholic herself, took me to one of those group meetings. She was marvelous; she saved my life. After being an utterly lost soul for fifteen years, I started all over from zero at the age of 46.

"I was even able to reconcile myself to the death of a man I loved, I met him while I was in the movies. One night I got so fed up being closeted in my Beverly Glen house I decided to go down to The Little Club in Beverly Hills and get drunk. I ordered six Paradise Cocktails — you know, the ones Kay Francis drank in *One Way Passage* — and downed them one right after the other. I thought if she can do this, so can I. So I was feeling no pain. When I left the bar, someone had pushed my brand new Buick convertible up on the sidewalk, but I couldn't get the gear into reverse and down on the road. Well, a Chevrolet convertible came

whipping around the corner with a Naval officer in it and he said, 'Would you like some help?' So he got out, lifted my car off the sidewalk and set it down on the street.

"That's how I met Tom Dooley, and we had a relationship for eight years, whenever he was in town. He was a very intelligent man, with all the charm of the Irish, and full of hell. He thought I was crazy, and he was right. But it was very romantic and I have wonderful memories."

Dooley was an internationally known U.S. Navy doctor, famed for his work establishing charity hospitals in Vietnam and Laos. He wrote three books about his experiences in the Orient, founded the Medical International Cooperation Organization (MEDICO), and lectured extensively throughout the world raising money to support the hospitals. In August, 1959 he was diagnosed with malignant melanoma and his three-hour chest surgery was televised on CBS. By December, 1960, the cancer had spread to his lungs, liver, spleen, heart and brain. He died January 18, 1961, the day after his 34th birthday. When his funeral was held at St. Louis Cathedral in Missouri, Francis Cardinal Spellman delivered his eulogy. Many of Dooley's supporters petitioned the Catholic Church to have him declared a saint, but the effort was finally abandoned.

"We had a wonderful give and take relationship, a very beautiful one," Bob Arthur remembers. "What was most frustrating was that 20th Century Fox owned the rights to his story but could never make a movie out of his life. When producer Frank McCarthy was at the studio preparing to make *Phantom*, he had me read a script that had been written about Tom's life. Robert Anderson, who wrote the Broadway play and screenplay for *Tea and Sympathy* had done it. It was very well crafted but had no humanity. They were afraid to add the human touch and couldn't create a believable story because Tom was such a do-gooder. What I wanted to tell them, and couldn't, was that they were missing his gayness. They weren't able to capture that part of him at all.

"At that time, Tom Dooley was considered an American hero. Now, if you ask people about him, they don't know who you're talking about. His family had remained quite distant from him because they knew he was gay, but nobody talked about it. In those days it was a disgrace, even though he wasn't open about it."

Robert Arthur worked in an insurance office for seven years until the owner died, then opened his own agency in 1978, having served the community as an openly gay man for ten years. His specialty was the gay market, he owned his own home, and feels he'd regained the respect of his peers. But it hap-

pened because of a change of attitude about who and what he was. In 1975 he formed the Community Guild, one of the first gay business associations, when politicians were beginning to take notice of the gay community as a group, courting them for votes and influence. Subsequently, he founded the Society for Senior Gay & Lesbian Citizens (SSGLC) in 1977, an organization that addressed the problems of ageing homosexuals with their particular gay emotional and medical problems.

Reflecting on his colorful past for this interview, Robert Arthur expressed a measure of personal contentment. "At least I'm comfortable today," he says. "I'm certainly not super-rich, but there was a time in my life I never thought I'd have another nice moment or that my health would be restored. I'm still excited about being alive. Now I'm proud of gay people and can honestly say I enjoy being gay. I owe a big debt to an awful lot of people who raised my consciousness. I am thrilled to this day to be able to say they were the lights of my life and gave me hope it was all right to be who I am. Not only all right but pretty damn wonderful!"

Arthur closed his insurance agency in 1985 and, following the death of his parents, inherited the family home in Aberdeen, Washington. That is where he has lived in retirement since 1995 with his cat, Wrigley. He occasionally appears in community stage productions, most recently *Love Letters*, and has written two novels, *Pansy Sonata* and *The Gay Impersonator*. He's also a great fan of the Turner Classic Movies cable channel, where he can catch his old films and re-live memories of life in Hollywood, good and bad, once again. ■



Verne Langdon is a man of many talents. Early careers in music and radio were followed by partnership in Don Post Studios, during which time (1963-1968) some of the most memorable creations like studio quality monster masks, Hollywood ape outfits, and other things like museum heads, a twelve-foot tall King Kong figure, and even death-like prop rubber skulls emerged. Verne worked as a makeup artist and lab technician in all Hollywood's major television and motion picture studios, including 20th Century Fox on all the *Planet of the Apes* films and *Planet TV* series, was a player in the Monster Revolution started by late night TV airings of monster pics and James Warren's *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine, wrote, produced and directed *The Land of a Thousand Faces* and "Castle Dracula" for Universal Studios Tour, and also founded Slammers Wrestling Gym and wrestling Federation. Verne has most certainly left his mark on the world of the bizarre and unusual. He is still involved with other monsters as well, as evidenced by the fact he wrote and performed the compositions for *The Phantom of the Organ*, *The Vampire at the Harpsichord*, and his new release *Music for Zombies* ("grave music for brave people!") More macabre music on the Electric Lemon Record Co. label is evidence that the melodic monster maker just keeps on truckin'. Immersed in Exotica of late, "Trader Verne the Beachcomber" was recently visited by *Cult Movies*. Here is an update to his life-in-progress.

Cult Movies: Mask collectors and Warren Publishing's *Famous Monsters* readers associate you with the Don Post Universal Calendar Masks.

Verne Langdon: I'm into monsters! I read the first issue of *FM*, and the second issue, and brought them with me when I joined Don Post Studios. I wanted studio-quality masks of the Universal monster characters, so that's what we made! Pat Newman sculpted those from pictures in *FM*!

CM: You and Don Post were partners; he sold you half of the company. So you were the "research & development" man?

VL: Yes. Don was the originator of "over-the-head" rubber masks, but at the time I came in, the business was sort of in limbo, and Don

was involved with a new business, vacuum-forming large props, and pretty much left me to run the mask business. I was responsible for everything that came out of Don Post Studios from 1963 to 1968, when I left.

CM: What was Don Post like?

VL: Don was a "Family Man," devoted to his wife and son. Don and Louise were among the few couples who stayed together in Hollywood. We had a lot of fun together. Their son, Don, who now runs the company with his son, Matt, has really expanded the business. His Parents would be very proud. I spent an evening at the Magic Castle with Don and his wife Nancy a couple years ago,

VL: A "Navy Grog" is a monster of a drink made with three kinds of rum, originally created by Don the Beachcomber. Trader Vic invented the Mai Tai. If you go to the Trader Verne website Kelly Mann created with me, you'll find the original recipe for the Perfect Navy Grog! (Three's the limit, for very good reason!) Another exotic cocktail I enjoy is "The Zombie," which I quaff from our own Trader Verne "Zombie Mug!"

CM: You're into zombies big-time these days. What's the story?

VL: In 1972, long after I left Don Post Studios, I created a couple of masks just for fun. I really had no idea what I was going to do with 'em. I was exiting CBS to join Stan Freberg at the time, and also directing the first show at Milt Larsen's Mayfair Music Hall out in Santa Monica. They looked good so I had photographer Milt Lewis shoot color transparencies (J.

Barry Herren had moved on to oceanography photography by this time and had put me in touch with Milton J. Lewis.) I sent the transparencies to James Warren to use in *Famous Monsters*. Jim loved the Zombie, put it on his *Creepy* 1972 Yearbook, and sent me a check for cover art. When that issue hit the news stands, Jim got on the phone to me, saying his readers were writing and calling, wanting to buy a Zombie mask. We decided on a price. Jim created that wonderful ad, and I was back in the mask business, something I didn't exactly need at the time. I filled a few of the orders, then turned creation of the masks over to a makeup artist friend, Terry Smith (Terry sadly passed away a few years ago).

CM: So James Warren launched your Zombie mask. He's a close friend of yours. Would you say he pioneered "monster mania"?

VL: Yes. James Warren was the co-founder-original publisher of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine, CEO of Warren Communications, and publisher of *Creepy*, *Eerie*, *Monster World*, *Vampirella*, and *Blazing Combat*. He fueled the "monster craze" of the '50s by presenting the fantastic anew, giving Forry, Bob Bloch, Don Post Studios and yours truly, and many others, a place to be read, seen, sold, and lionized. Read his excellent book *The Warren*

Verne Langdon: Off the Chain!

and we had a great time reminiscing. This year, on September 27, Don Roebuck produced an interview for TV with Don and me, at Don Post Studios! We had some laughs, and more memories.

CM: You've been a mask-maker, puppeteer, makeup artist, musician, magician, wrestler, record producer, performer, and now you're known as "Trader Verne the Beachcomber." Why?

VL: Because I live on the beach, comb it a lot, and build Navy Grogs. Exotica saloon entrepreneurs Don the Beachcomber and Trader Vic are two of my Heroes. Hence, "Trader Verne the Beachcomber!"

CM: What's a "Navy Grog"?

by Coco Kiyonaga and Michael Copner

Companion [Twomorrows Publishing, Raleigh, NC edited by David A. Roach and Jon B. Cooke, with James Warren as consultant]; it tells it as it happened. There would have been no *Famous Monsters of Filmland* without James Warren, and that's the truth! He ran a tight ship, his motto being, "I'm not always right, but I'm always the boss!" I salute him and will forever cherish our great friendship. James is one of my principal mentors. There wouldn't be a Zombie mask today had Jim not featured it on the *Creevy 1972 Yearbook* cover!

CM: So now, thirty years later, Kelly Mann is producing the Zombie mask. How did he approach you?

VL: My good friend Dante Renta met with me one day and brought up the question if I'd be interested in having The Zombie re-created in a limited edition. I liked the idea, so Dante put me together with Kelly, his incredibly-gifted friend in Arizona (via Hollywood). I licensed Kelly to do a limited edition, thus launching Zombie Mania, plus a remarkable friendship and business relationship that is in its second year and going strong!

CM: Are you happy with Kelly's recreation of your classic Zombie?

VL: Completely! Kelly Mann drove in from Arizona to present me with the Zombie prototype. It's really a masterpiece! He's already sold two-thirds of the limited run of 30; no more will be made after 30, and the mold will be destroyed. Each mask is numbered, issued with a certificate of authenticity, signed by both Kelly and me. Kelly creates each one by hand, so every Zombie is top studio-quality craftsmanship. Now we're making Zombie t-shirts and Zombie tiki mugs! These are really neat, and again, he's done a first-class job on them. Kelly is a perfectionist like myself, which makes him extremely easy to work with. I very much admire his artistry, and beyond this, he's a scintillating individual. He did the cover and additional artwork for the *Music for Zombies* CD.

CM: Now there's a Zombie CD too?

VL: Electric Lemon's brand new *Music for Zombies* CD came about as a result of the other Zombie merchandise, plus Kelly's encouragement and input. The Zombie masks, tiki mugs and T-shirts are doing well, so we came up with the idea of "zombie music." It was only natural *Music for Zombies* would be the next Electric Lemon Release. It's a fun CD. Kelly is co-producer of the CD. Milt "Magic Castle" Larsen is Executive Producer. This is a very special CD! Horror collectors will treasure it! *Music for Zombies* features some rare stuff from my own personal vault, plus a couple

He uses *Phantom* occasionally, usually for background during his Bela Lugosi impression, and features cuts from *Candlelight*, which I recorded on the Dejavu label, behind his "Very Special Howard Stern" interviews. It's romantic, New Age mood music. Actually very restive and calming. Good to listen to during rush hour or if you're having trouble sleeping.

CM: Have you ever met Howard Stern?

VL: No, but I'd like to meet him, and thank him personally!

CM: Milt Larsen, creator of the Magic Castle, produced *An Evening with Boris Karloff and his Friends* with you. He's involved with Electric Lemon Records too?

VL: Very definitely. Milt Larsen is the Executive Producer, and I'm the Producer.

CM: How did you come to know Milt?

VL: I knew Milt's brother, Bill Larsen Jr, from magic and his *Genii* the *Conjuror's Magazine*. It all began when I invited Bill, whom I'd known for some time, to come out and see Don Post Studios. Bill took one look and said "Milt would LOVE this place!" So Bill sent Milt out, and Bill was right, Milt LOVED the place, and put our masks to good use as the Castle's monsters. Pretty soon we were making dummies, props, and spooky gimmicks for The Magic Castle! So that's how I got to know



Verne Langdon and old, old, old fiend, er, friend!

new things I recorded especially for the CD! Buy it, You'll like it! Great for haunted houses, dark rides, heavy storms, or zombies tottering up your front steps at midnight!

CM: Any "bites" commercially as yet for *Music for Zombies*?

VL: The TV soap opera *Passions* just used "Spirit Symphony" from *Music for Zombies*. I love having my music used for soaps. I used to work on *Days of our Lives*, and it was fun. *Days* has used *The Phantom of the Opera*, and so did *Good Times*. Other shows that use my music have included *Entertainment Tonight*, *All My Children*, and of all people, Howard Stern!

Milt.

CM: Is Milt a musician as well as a magician?

VL: Yes, Milt Larsen is a magician AND a musician! He plays a pretty hot violin, and also - of all things - the musical saw. It's kind of spooky, because my Dad played violin, and the saw too, and not many people know how to play a saw! Anyway, as I came to know Milt, I discovered his interests in music and recording. He created The Mayfair Music Hall in Santa Monica, the Variety Arts Center in downtown Los Angeles, and the never-completed, always magically-evolving world-famous Magic

Castle in Hollywood. Whenever I start feeling like I'm doing a lot in life, I think about Milt and all he's accomplishing, and I'm humbled into the ground! Milt likes to say about himself "I was born with a silver spoon in my mouth, unfortunately later I found out it wasn't mine." With his incredible talents, and all he's done for people, myself included, he's earned the love and respect of a great number of people. He's extremely successful, and doesn't need that silver spoon. He's had an enormous influence on my life, ever since we first met in 1963. He's responsible (so you can blame him!) for a great deal of what I've managed to accomplish with my music. I like to think of us as "The Electric Lemon Brothers!"

CM: How did the Karloff album come to be?

VL: We produced *An Evening with Boris Karloff & His Friends* because we believed in the idea. We didn't have a sale, nor did we even think about who would release it. I guess our first thought was to release it ourselves. I had dreamed up the concept of putting voice tracks from the classic monster movies on record. One day I pitched my idea to Milt. He thought it was great, but suggested we needed somebody to "host." I thought Milt should do it, or maybe Forry Ackerman. Then Milt suggested Boris Karloff. A stroke of genius!

CM: How did you go about producing it?

VL: Universal licensing's Norma Walker and I put the voice tracks deal together. I knew Norma from my Post Studios merchandising days, so I was granted an option on the voice tracks. The Studio loaned us nice crisp new 35 mm prints, and we ran them in Milt's home theater without the picture, because it was SOUND we needed, and we wanted to be able to concentrate and not be distracted by the action. We chose the famous lines, and went over to Sunset Sound and dubbed those scenes, then Frank Bresce edited our tape master. During this time we negotiated (or, as Variety would say, we "hammered out" a deal) with Boris Karloff's agent (later to become MY agent!) Arthur Kennard, a hard-nosed vet capable of dealing with ANYBODY in Hollywood, New York, or the world! Arthur once represented Bela Lugosi, Vincent Price, Boris Karloff, Lon Chaney Jr., Basil Rathbone, Peter Lorre, and Elisha Cook Jr. ALL AT THE SAME TIME! In 1966 we signed and recorded Boris! Incidentally, Arthur recently presented me with the original contract agreement signed by Boris, Milt, and myself!

CM: Did Arthur Kennard put the deal together with Decca Records?

VL: No. Barney McDevitt, a music industry press agent, shopped it around, and when nobody else showed interest, Barney finally sold it to Charles "Bud" Dant, another music industry vet and at the time, a Decca Records executive. Decca belonged then, as now, to Universal. We had sold our project to the studio that licensed us! I pushed for Korla Pandit to score the album because of his classic work on radio's "Chandu the Magician", but Decca had Bill Loose under contract, and Bill wrote and conducted the excellent score. When *An Evening with Boris Karloff and his Friends* was released in 1967, Decca held a big press party for Boris at the Magic Castle, and he told us it was the very first time anybody had ever given him a press party! He was 80 years old, and it was about time! I think Decca maybe didn't know how to market the album, so sales were practically nonexistent, but it didn't matter, because just a year or so later the Lugosi heirs hit Universal with a lawsuit that made legal history and rocked Hollywood. Universal pulled all monster merchandise bearing Bela Lugosi's likeness, and wrote Decca (and all of us other licensors!) a "cease-and-desist from using Bela's likeness or voice" type letter. We offered to buy the album back, but they said they were restricted from re-assigning license agreements. No soap. Period. Milt and I felt, then as now, that *An Evening with Boris Karloff & His Friends* is an all-time classic. The script by Forrest J. Ackerman was nothing short of outstanding, and Frank Bresce's editing was perfect. I'm so glad to this day we did that album. Two years later (2/2/69) Boris left us. "He was well loved not just by his fans, but by all of Hollywood, for his greatest character - his own."

CM: How did you come up with *The Phantom of the Organ*?

VL: Over libations at the Magic Castle's downstairs bar. Milt and I were lamenting the fact Decca wouldn't sell *Karloff* back to us. Then Milt got "that look" in his eyes - I actually saw a light bulb appear over his head and switch to "on!" He suggested we do our own spooky album. I'd recorded spooky pipe organ cues for the Castle's Houdini Séance, so Milt recalled that "sound," connected it to Lon Chaney's ghostly Phantom, and we put *The Phantom of the Organ* out on Electric Lemon Records. The rest is horror history!

CM: How was *Phantom of the Organ* received by the record-buying public?

VL: Nobody really knew what *Phantom* was when it first came out, but they liked it! I advertised it in Bill Larsen's *Genii Magazine*, and magicians, magic dealers and novelty shops all went nuts for it. They all started ordering, and we lined up representation, California Record Distributors, to carry *Phantom*. Record reviewers I'd send it to like Emerson Bendorff in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* gave *Phantom* RAVES, and before long Disneyland, then Disney World, carried it in their magic shops.

CM: *The Phantom of the Organ* inspired *The Vampyre at the Harpsichord*?

VL: When we saw *Phantom* doing so well, we recorded and released a sequel, *The Vampyre at the Harpsichord*, followed by *Music for Magicians*, *Dr. Druid's Hallowed Séance*, *Circus Clown Calliope! Volumes 1 & 2*, three Bork gems, "Honkeychord," "Bork/Live!" and "Musical Menopause," plus some other fun things ("WE MAKE MUSIC FOR FUN!") A visit to our website will introduce (or re-introduce) you to our Family of "Lemons," all of which are now available on CDs, instead of LPs.

CM: Where did you record *Phantom*, *Music for Magicians*, and *Zombies*?

VL: *Phantom of the Organ*, *Music for Magicians*, *Halloween Spookacular* and *Poe With Pipes* were all recorded at Whitney Studios, then located at 1516 W. Glenouks Boulevard, in Glendale. We used Lorin Whitney's massive 4-manual, 34-ranks-of-pipes Wurli-Morton, which Lorin and Walt Disney had built the studio around, many years before. Around 1993 Universal bought the studio containing the organ from Lorin, but when MCA and Universal divorced, they sold Whitney and the organ off, separately. Both are now, tragically, gone. Korla Pandit recorded there and introduced me to that organ and studio; Korla's and my recorded works are about all that survived from Whitney Studios.

CM: Where did you record *Vampyre at the Harpsichord*?

VL: *Vampyre at the Harpsichord* was recorded at Capitol Records, as well as several of the selections from our *Music for Zombies* brand new release. The pipe organ work on "Zombies" was also done at Whitney from earlier recordings. Everything on "Music for Zombies" are original compositions of mine from my own music vaults, and none have ever been available on CD's. It's a real Collector's item!

CM: Who is Johann Sebastian Bork, and how did he come to be?

TRADER VERNE'S TIKI LOUNGE

VL:

Bork is a musical enigma, nobody's answer to anything, and the best-kept secret in FUN (until now!) He sort of "backed into the hall", so to speak, like so many other things in my life. Bork was "conceived" the night I recorded "Vampyre at the Harpsichord" in the Capitol Records tower on Vine Street in Hollywood. I had just finished the last sinister composition for the album, *Waltz of the Ghoulis*. I stood up from the bench with aching back and very sore fingers, and said to my engineer, Jay Ranellucci, "That's all. It's a wrap." Jay said, "Play Melancholy Baby!" I used to play piano in saloons — "piano bars" — and that's a joke among bar players, because every drunk in the place always blurts out that request because it's the only song they can remember in their besotted state. We all laughed, then Jay said "You've got another hour of studio time you're paying for, and besides, I've always liked that song. It might sound interesting on a harpsichord; try it!" So right there in Studio C at Capitol Records I literally banged out "Melancholy Baby", and it sounded great on a harpsichord! Then Dawn asked me to play "Carousel Dreams," which was the first song I ever wrote (April Stevens, Kay Starr and Jaye P. Morgan each recorded it,) and that sounded great too. Bob Zraick was there that night, and he requested "Dixie" and "St. Louis Blues," and I kept going. All one-takes. Sixty minutes later I had a dozen songs, and my fingers were bleeding. Playing Dixieland and honky-tonk on a harpsichord is like beating bongo rhythms on an iron skillet! The next day Milt listened to everything, and loved it. He said "Let's go with it," so we did!

CM: How did you come up with "Bork", the character, to go with the "Bork music"?

VL: I was working with Gary "Laugh In" Owens at the time at CBS Television City, and gave him a copy of the songs, telling him we were going to put out a honky-tonk album by "Ragtime Verne" or something

like that, and would he write the liner notes? Gary was more than happy to oblige, but wanted to hear the stuff first to get an idea. The next day he came up to me, gave back the reference copy I'd made for him, and said "I listened. You're not going to put YOUR name on this, are you? I mean, if you ever want to do anything straight, nobody will take you seriously." The years have proven Gary right, though at the time my ego got

bruised. Gary was waiting for me to come up with a name. I remembered

"Gremlin Loring" warns "Trader Verne" there's a three-grog limit!



Don Sherwood, "The World's Greatest Disc Jockey," who once cracked about the noise a fart in the bathtub makes...sort of a "bork" sound. I doubled over when Don said that, and now I remembered him, his joke, and that word. "How about Bork?" Gary picked right up on it and said "Great! Johann Sebastian Bork!!" So Bork was named by Don Sherwood and Gary Owens, two of the biggest names in radio, ever; two people I've greatly admired for years. Gary wrote some hysterical liner notes, and Bob Zraick and I collaborated on the Bork character for the exquisite and very funny airbrush cover Bob did for the "Honkeychord" album. Gary can be heard on Bork's recently-released *Fugue You!* CD.

CM: How many Bork albums have you done prior to the new CD?

VL: Bork did three LP albums for Electric Lemon. His new CD *Fugue You!* is a milestone, or maybe a quarter-mile-stone. But Bork's first LP record album was *Johann Sebastian Bork's Honkeychord*, which was what I recorded that night at Capitol, back-to-back with *The Vampire at the Harpsichord*. When *Honkeychord* was ready to release, Milt came up with the idea to feature Bork live in concert (an "Annual Farewell Debut" as he put it) to hype the release. So I came up with makeup and a costume, and Bork was born!

CM: Where did the Bork "Annual Farewell Debut" take place?

VL: The concert exploded at Milt's elegant Mayfair Music Hall in Santa Monica. It's a good thing we decided to record the show for posterity (and another album!) Carson Taylor, Capitol's "concertive expert" for many years, immortalized Bork that night. Carson had recorded concert per-

formances for such Capitol titan Talents as Frank Sinatra and Peggy Lee. During the evening I'd look over and see him seated tentatively at his console, with a very pained expression on his face. Let's be honest: Bork is no Liberace! Still, a few months later *Bork/Live!* was released to the mutterings of bewildered music critics everywhere, then in 1974 we issued *Musical Menopause*, which included some of my own things, "At The Home," "Makin' Something for You," "Golden Years," and "The Bork Shuffle." Today you can't find these albums anywhere. I know because I've looked. I think somebody threw them away as a service to music lovers. Or maybe Milt is keeping them in one of his warehouses until the "Bork boom" hits, which may come any day now! Bork is an underground phenomenon, but he might just dig his way out from underground any day now. Interest in Bork's new CD, *Fugue You!*, is swelling among those who take their music with a grain of salt, and a wound to rub it in.

CM: You did a nightclub show called "Borklesque!" How did this come to be, where did it play, and how long did the show run?

VL: Milt Larsen booked Bork into the Tin Pan Alley Room of his opulent Variety Arts Club Center, and Bork did four weeks (two and two), to pretty good reaction. For one number I used my pal, former Mr. California Dave Dupre, back-naked except for some baby oil and a posing thong. He flexed his spectacular pecs, biceps, triceps, and other awesomely-fully-over-developed ceps, at the click of my cricket-clicker, as I diddled around on the keys with "Claire de Lune" (Miss de Lune didn't seem to mind at all.) This number brought the house down every night! My friend John Pedro did an incredible rendition (in Egyptian drag!) of "Sheena the Queen-a the Nile," a song Milt and Richard M. Sherman wrote for a musical they did called "The Whoopie Kid" years ago. This Bork offering went over real well, so Milt asked us to do something on a larger scale for the upcoming New Year's Eve party in the club's cavernous Variety Roof Garden main room. Keith Cray created "Borklesque!" with me, and appeared as the "Emcee," a "Cabaret" type character who sings the opening number ala Joel Gray. Dave Dupre was back as a tap-dancing witch doctor, sporting his total package, this time in grass skirt, tribal headress, a

TOP: The pall that started it all! Verne Langdon's classic Zombie graces *Creepy's* cover! MIDDLE: The Mask Doctor is in! Kelly Mann recreates Verne Langdon's Zombie! BOTTOM: "Have a cigar!" and Johann Sebastian Bork does!

bone in his nose, a spear in his hand, and shiny black tap shoes, doing a snappy buck-and-wing he learned for the show, while I assailed the nine-foot Steinway Grand with "The Gra-NOLA Rag," a gorgeous jungle girl (Beverly Saggi) was chased through the audience by a gorilla (Bradley Della Valle) in hot pursuit, and all the waiters ran for cover. In the end the witch doctor gets the gorilla. John reprised "Sheena," and I did a few numbers including "Old Mother Truckee," written by dangerous mind Chuck Barris, and a searing parody of Peggy Lee's hit, "Is That All There Is?" Bob Mackie came up with the awesome wardrobe, and Peter Minns designed a new outfit for Bork.

The reviews (*L.A. Times*, *Hollywood Reporter*, *Daily Variety*, *Cashbox*) are great (they can be found verbatim in the souvenir Bork booklet that accompanies *Fugue You!*) Everybody loved the show, Milt brought us back in March/April of 1979 for two weeks, then we finished up and put everything in storage, where it remains to this very day.

CM: Is Bork's *Fugue You!* CD "live" from the show, a recreation of the show, or something else?

VL: It's "something else," all right! Several live cuts from "Borklesquel" are featured as "bonus tracks." Other than these "Borklesquel" live cuts, there're mifty ragtime piano things. Also "Michael Feinstoole" sings his number two song, "I'm the #1 Fan of the Elephant Man," which is my favorite song on the whole CD! I think you can best describe *Fugue You!* as a blend of Joe "Fingers" Carr, Spike Jones & The City Slickers, and Weird Al Yankovic. Quite

a listening experience. I'm very proud of *Fugue You!*, and it inspired yet another Bork CD, *Get Lei'd!*, which is a send-up of "tiki" or "exotica" music, coming soon. I'm really stoked about this project! "Trader Verne" sings "Suppin' a Navy Grog," a song I wrote about my fave tropical cocktail. Bork is at his best singing the title song ("Get Lei'd!") Bork's Dixieland group, "The Kreeblemyer Islanders," really kick it, and Scream Queen Bobbie "Mausoleum" Breesee (yrs, HER!), half-sings, half-whispers, a very hot and steamy "Phantom Lover Man!" Bork is very "cult!"

CM: Would you say Electric Lemon is "mainstream?"

VL: Are you kidding? With only five releases? Hardly. But thanks to our Distributor (The Orchard in New York,) we're getting into the new legitimate digital music services, which marks the beginning of a change from the physical to digital delivery of music. Now artists and labels will be paid for their work without having to incur the costs of manufacturing! This means that for the very first time in the history of this world, ALL the music in the world will be available to all the PEOPLE of the world, without the restrictions of time, distance, and space! The Orchard is concluding arrangements now with all the major legitimate digital music services, some of which are already in place. It's just awesome what advancements are being made in the music world.

CM: How did you get into music?

VL: I was musical before I was monstrous.

Well, I like to think so. Maybe not! At two I was crawling up on the piano bench playing melodies. By the time I was five I could play popular songs. My Mother was First Cellist for the NBC Network orchestra, and also for the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. My Father was an Oral Surgeon, but played violin and musical saw, when he wasn't pulling teeth! My Uncle on my Mother's side was Red Nichols (Red Nichols & the Five Pennies Dixieland band), so I was born into it. I worked for Sherman Clay & Co. in my hometown of San Jose, CA. as a piano mover, then as salesman and demonstrator, and I played in their store window every day from noon until 2 p.m. I felt like a goldfish. But they always kept my tank clean and fed me. Before long I was performing in concert for them on the Hammond organ, and Ferguson Music House, on the Wuritzer organ, about the same time. Sherman Clay during the day, evenings at Ferguson Music House. both in San Jose, within walking distance of one another! When I went into radio, Sherman Clay sponsored my show (I recorded in the store after hours,) and before long Ferguson Music House came in as a sponsor too!

CM: Who were your music teachers?

VL: I studied with Thomas Ryan, who was then Head of the Music Department at San Jose State University. He was a brilliant pianist. Later I studied theory and technique with Korla Pandit, the Godfather of Exotica, and a huge TV star when the medium was in its infancy. Thomas Ryan and Korla Pandit, along with my wonderful Uncle, jazz great



MASK MASTERS REUNION! (L-R) Don Post, Verne Langdon, Evil Wilhelm, Dan Roelback, Rob Tharpe, and (front) Dante Renta

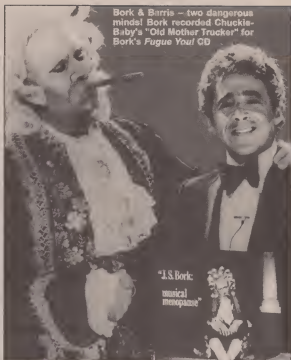
Rod Nichols, whom I worshipped as a kid and even more so now. Incidentally, on Bork's upcoming *Get Leif* CD, I play "The King Kong," written by my uncle after the classic movie; it became a thirties dance craze! It came out real nice. Anyway, those were my musical mentors. My blessed mother was my teacher at home, disciplining me through hours and hours and hours of Hannon exercises, Chopin, Mozart, Bach, Brahms, and Ludwig Von Beethoven.

CM: Tell us a little about Korla Pandit.

VL: Korla Pandit's credo was "First you have to get their attention!" He certainly did! Korla was an incredibly gifted, innovative original, and fine teacher; I knew him, I admired him, I learned from him, and I think the world is less without him. Korla Pandit was a musician, a mesmerist, and a grand illusion, famous for his lops, his eyes, his turban with the Smokey Topaz jewel and hypnotic dangling Diamond, his beautifully-inspirational music, and the fact that for all his years on radio and Television, he never spoke a word, gazing dreamily, instead, into the camera and into the hearts and imaginations of millions upon millions of viewers over the years. I often refer to him as "the Godfather of Exotica." We've created a website dedicated to him at <http://www.korlapandit.com>. I invite your readers to visit and enjoy Korla's site, and learn more about this creative musical Genius.

CM: How do you approach a project?

VL: Very quietly. You gotta sneak up on it! I never concern myself with what others are doing. My childhood was filled with unusual fascinations coupled with very strong desires. These are the things I develop and pursue. I've found that it's easier to do something nobody has a frame of reference for, so originality has always come before everything else. I think copying others is pointless. At best you're only a good "copy", and at worst, you stink. I've never said "This oughta really sell and make me a lot of money." From masks to a wrestling gym and museum, exotica, music, or mugs, these are things I do for my own enjoyment. If others derive similar pleasure, that's GREAT! But my wants and needs are behind everything. I give it my all, and wallow in the joy of its fruition. In *The Rocky Horror Show*, when young Janet offers her opinion of 'Rocky', Dr. Frankenfurter's boy-toy ("I don't like a man who has too many muscles"), Tim Curry as the "sweet transvestite from transsexual Transylvania" snaps back at her, "I didn't MAKE him for



Bork & Barris - two dangerous minds! Bork recorded Chuckie-Baby's "Old Mother Trucker" for Bork's *Fugue You!* CD

"J.S. Bork:

musical
menopause"

YOU!" It's been that way with me from the day I was born.

CM: Obviously you've been successful. To what do you attribute your success?

VL: "Success", is a very interpretive word. To me, "success" is good health, good Friends, and good Family. I've got all three, so yes, I'm "successful." Also, I've had the great pleasure of doing everything I've ever wanted to do. I'm very grateful for that Blessing. I believe any talent I may possess is a gift from God, and what I do with that talent is my gift to God. I'm SO lucky to have been born to Parents who loved me and always offered encouragement and support.

CM: How would you describe yourself?

VL: Born of perfectly normal parents, but "off the chain" from day one.

CM: Words you live by?

VL: I'll give you a thought I try to keep in mind always, and that

is: "Talent is God-given - be thankful. Praise is man-given - be humble. Concert is self-given - be careful." Truly, these are words to live well by.

CM: Any parting words for us?

VL: Well, I'm not planning on "parting" for a real long time. But forty or fifty years from now, when I finally do catch the bus, I know for a fact I'll exit smiling. I'm living a life of self-gratification, and to my own self I'm true. If I seem to have the attitude "It's MY world. YOU'RE just living in it", well, it's only because that's how I feel, and I think everybody else feels the same way about his or her own life. At least I hope they do. ■

For more info on Verne Langdon, be sure to visit:
www.geocities.com/traderverne/tikilounge.html
www.ELECTRICLEMON.com
www.dejavu-record-co.com/records.htm
www.boxofmonsters.com/langdon1.html

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Are the **MAD SCIENTISTS** **MANIACS** and **MADMEN** of yesterday the ancestors of today's **TERRORISTS?**

TERRORIST?

Part One: Cult Creeps
From World War II!

BY **JAN ALAN
HENDERSON**



According to *Webster's Dictionary*, "Terror" is from Latin "terro," to frighten. "Terrorist" – one who rules by intimidation. "Terrorize" – to impress with terror; to repress or domineer over by means of terror. "Terrorism" – a system of government by terror; intimidation.

Everywhere we go, in everything we do today, we are confronted with terror! Switch on the television for your daily dose of news, paranoia, and sports, and like it or not, you'll get a dose of foreign, domestic, and technological terrorism. The question this column poses is: are the latter-day mad doctors. Maniacs, and madmen the great grandfathers of today's terrorist paranoia? Or, has everything remained the same? Has the passage of time merely changed the accouterments through technology? Or, were Osama bin Ladin and Saddam Hussein raised on *Chiller Theater*, *Creature Features*, *Weird*, *Weird World*, and *Shock Theater* in the late night of their desert minds? Could these Western cinematic delicacies have driven them to a life of crime with religious sanctuary either here or in the after-life as the ultimate reward? How many of our modern-day domestic terrorists, many of whom probably had wet dreams and zombie fetishes over the late-night shockers, actually acted on these impulses, or ended up blowing up government buildings and shooting up high schools? Could they be suffering from indigestion of the imagination? Or maybe just delusions!

Since the beginning of popular culture (cinema, records, books, plays, etc.), strong warnings have been voiced against what each generation (or its government) considered deviant, morbid, and unsuitable material. Despite the warnings, some social observers believe that horror, science fiction, and fantasy lead consumers and its creators into the devil's domain. Many such critics have social, religious, and political backgrounds which are the origins of their criticism. In short, does media (or lack of it) influence (even if in an unconscious way) the wrongs that men do? If so, what part do the antics of our ancestors play in any of all of this? Here is a baker's dozen checklist of wild and wacky Cult Movies that one (if stretching the imagination to the limit) could have a slender thread between the terrorists of yesterday and today. Judge for yourself!

BLACK DRAGONS

(Monogram 1942)

Here is a film that is over 60 years old, that reflects World War II schizophrenia. Here, *Cult Movies* posterboy Bela appears in a movie that seems to, and in reality does, make absolutely no sense. (Or could make perfect sense in a convoluted netherworld such as we live in in the present day). Lugosi is in fine form in this bare-brained monster drama, as he waxes philosophical about the world condition, that is as strangely ironic and cryptic as our present day headlines. Clayton Moore, known to most on the celluloid range as the Lone Ranger on television and in the movies, has one of his most visible supporting roles in a forgotten horror which in the present day one still comes away with a different meaning after each viewing.

Recently released on DVD by Alpha Home Video, *Black Dragons* is a tour de force of Poverty Row propaganda featuring Nazi Agent Lugosi's quackie facelift in a Japanese prison. Even better, the *Black Dragons* were a real Japanese sup ring. This film must be seen to be believed!

THE MAD MONSTER

(PRC 1942)

This is a wartime delirium from the cinema of the absurd files. There is no other movie (well, maybe 10 or 12) that in the first seven minutes has a mad scientist hallucinate his former colleagues/enemies and give them a lecture on his new werewolf serum, as his helpless handyman struggles on a psychiatrist's couch after world famous bad man George Zucco injects him with his lycanthropy juice and delivers a diatribe (to his audience of hallucinations) on how his werewolves will win World War II (with fanatical fury). What if there was an individual in the wilds of suburbia who, as we speak, was breeding a horde of werewolves to conquer our terrorist enemies in the new millennium?

The problem with this film is, after Zucco's hallucinatory speech, Glenn Strange as the hapless blond werewolf of Oshkosh does nothing more for the war effort than run around the swamps and whack out the neighbors. So much for WWII propaganda. But it's Zucco's performance that puts this show over the top. Johnny Downs as the long-suffering boyfriend and Anne Nagel as Zucco's daughter are suitably terrorized. Available on VHS and DVD.

SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE VOICE OF TERROR

(Universal 1942)

The first of the twelve Sherlock Holmes films produced by Universal, after acquiring the rights to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's master detective from 20th Century Fox. Originally titled "Sherlock Holmes Saves London," this first adventure is close to our modern-day terrorism insofar as the terrorists communicate by sound recordings (records as opposed to audio and video tapes). The difference is that the messages warn of specific acts of violence, as opposed to today's messages which are vague threats, and monologues laced with zealot ideology.

Universal's reigning scream queen Evelyn Ankers turns in a stand-out performance as the doomed Kitty, who spies on the Nazi spies who are sabotaging prime locations in the U.K.

Based on the Conan Doyle Holmes story *His Last Bow* and updated to the World War II era, this flick has an ample helping of patriotism, some of which is taken directly from Conan Doyle's pen.

Voice of Terror is available on VHS and rumored (along with all the other Holmes films, Public Domain and otherwise) to be being prepared for DVD release.

Henry Daniell is wasted in this show, as a member of the British Council. His talent for villainy is better served in his other Holmes films. Playing a good guy doesn't give Daniell much room to shine.

TERRORIST ACT?



SHERLOCK HOLMES IN WASHINGTON

(Universal 1943)

The weakest of the three World War II Holmes mysteries, and not based on a Conan Doyle story, *Washington* is a predictable but enjoyable picture. Here the mystery revolves around missing microfilm hidden in a Victory match folder, passed around in a train and in the wilds of wartime Washington, D.C. (Lighting half the cigarettes in the nation's capital). A good amount of footage is devoted to a motor tour of D.C. via Universal's stock footage library. The dialogue is at times routine, and the comic relief is a bit dated.

A fine cast, again featuring the talents of George Zucco, Henry Daniell, Marjory Lord (pre-Danny Thomas), John Archer (who played *The Shadow* on radio for a brief time), and Holmes Herbert. Fun World War II fodder with little similarities between the terrors of the second World War and today's War on Terrorism.

SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE SECRET WEAPON

(Universal 1942)

Here is the last of Holmes' great battles of good vs. evil during World War II. Holmes is pitted against his most dastardly enemy, Professor Moriarty, in a wartime drama based on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Dancing Men*. Calligraphy plays a large part in this mystery. Could Saddam and Osama be using calligraphy? Or better yet, coded messages in their audio tapes? Body lan-

guage in their videos? This movie proves that Saddam and Osama aren't really innovators, but merely recycling ideas that maybe even they read as small children, like the rest of us. Or maybe due to their belief systems, these materials were off limits, and they snack a read when their parents weren't looking.

Lionel Atwill is superb as Professor Moriarty. His reptilian eyes during his speech, where he is setting Holmes up for a reverse blood transfusion that will rob Holmes of his last drop of blood, are as exhilarating as his performance in the Universal classic *Son of Frankenstein* (where he portrays the one-armed Inspector Krog, who as a child had his arm "torn out by the roots" by the Frankenstein monster), or Dr. X in the midst of a two-strip technicolor pile of "synthetic flesh;" or better yet, the crazed, crippled wax sculptor in *Mystery at the Wax Museum*.

Holmes and the Secret Weapon is one of the best entries of that series, and conveys the paranoia of World War II.

THE SUPERMAN CARTOONS

(produced by Max and Dave Fleischer 1941-1943)

These animated seven to ten minute shorts from the Man of Steel's golden age reflect the furor and intensity of today's contemporary news reports regarding terrorism—possibly because the news reports are the same lengths and with as much exaggerated information as these Superman cartoons. In the three years since Superman's comic book debut, the world around him, as documented in these seventeen Super Adventures had become out of control and riddled with sloth and the paranoia of World War II. With titles like *The Bulleters*, *Terror on the Midway*, *The Japovers*, *Destruction, Inc.*, and *The Secret Agent*, it is certain that Superman in his early years through WW II was barely a shade left of a vigilante. Mad scientists, mechanical monsters, iron plated cars, reanimated dinosaurs, domestic terrorists, threats from outer space, threats from inner space (as in earthquakes), and mummies, oriental enemies, and a Nazi or two inhabited the First Citizen of Metropolis's life on Earth in these lushly animated Technicolor adventures.

Recently restored and re-released on Bosko Video and distributed by Image Entertainment.

THE INVISIBLE AGENT

(Universal 1942)

Fifty-nine years before the Twin Towers fell,

Universal took the war to the enemy. They sent contract player Jon Hall to foil a planned attack on New York City.

While one can visualize the parallel universe possibilities, the emphasis of this film is wartime heroics, rather than the Invisible Man legend. It's a grand showcase for special effects wizard John P. Fulton, none the less.

Hona Massey plays a double agent who fools Jon Hall up til the show's climax, and Hall fools Third Reich officers Sir Cedric Hardwicke and J. Edward Bromberg. Peter Lorre has a choice character role as a high-ranking Japanese official who takes the honorable way out after failing to defeat Jon Hall's Invisible One. All this from the imaginative brain and screenplay of famed storyteller Curt Siodmak.

Available from Universal Home Video, on VHS tapes.

THE BATMAN

(A Columbia Serial in 15 Chapters, 1943)

In *Cult Movies #13*, this serial was dissected, praised, and glorified. The Batman makes his cinematic debut among Japanese spies and horrendous racism. In its day, this was hardcore propaganda, but today it plays as antiquated silliness. When it was re-released in 1966 to hype the Adam West *Batman* TV show, it was shown under the banner of *An Evening With Batman and Robin* (all 15 Bat Chapters at one sitting).

Running over four hours in length, the audiences booed, howled, and rolled in the aisles as Batman and Robin made hilarious attempts to battle the (over emphasized) oriental evil of villain Doctor Daka, played by J. Carrol Naish (an Irishman, not from the Irish section of Tokyo).

Some of the fights are amateurish to say the least. In one, Batman steps on his cape, tears it off, and continues fighting sans cape, as if nothing had happened. Holy Continuity, Batman! It looks as if these fights were free-for-alls instead of the gloriously choreographed fights featured in Republic serials.

Naish, while participating in this lowest of low art forms (movie serials), was nominated for an Academy Award for his work in *Sahara*, the same year as *Batman*. Naish essayed Charlie Chan for television in the early '50s, and was a member of the Devil's Brood as the hunchback Daniel in Universal's eternally popular *House of Frankenstein*.

In a semi-logical subplot, veteran bad guy Charles Middleton plays Batman and Robin a visit. Rich from a Radium strike, Ken Colton (Middleton) dies doing battle

with Dr. Daka's thugs, providing viewers with some of the best Batman action in this serial, which over the decades has been labeled everything from laughable to racial-offensive.

What does this have to do with terrorism of the present day? Doctor Daka's operation was run from an innocent-looking Tunnel of Love ride in plain sight! A World War II terrorist cell in Gotham City. Holy Paranoia! Batman, the Tunnel of Love!

Good Times Video released an altered version of *Batman* in the 1990s.



THE RETURN OF THE VAMPIRE

(Columbia 1943)

This film has to be high up on Lugosi fiends' top ten lists. Here is one of the first examples of the teaming of two titans of terror under one cinematic awning. While the year before, *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman* pit mechanical monster (Frankenstein) against mythology (the Wolfman), *Return of the Vampire* might be the first teaming of a lycanthrope and a vampire. This far-out scenario revolves around two civil defense workers cleaning out a bombed-out London graveyard, and reanimating Lugosi, who in turn re-lycanthropes the protagonist's assistant, making this a most unique World War II horror flick. It's hard to imagine that any *Cult Movies* readers (maybe folks who just discovered this 'zine) haven't seen *Return of the Vamp* but if you haven't, the blend of the Columbia backlot's London and this werewolf and vampire tale is sure to amuse, if not become a favorite.

The propaganda is kept at a low pro-

CULT MOVIES

file, while the lighting, art direction, and cinematography are top-notch. Some Lugosi fans have told this writer over the years that they feel *Return of the Vampire* is a more effective Lugosi film than *Dracula* (an opinion I do not share). It is a definite top-ten Lugosi favorite, effectively blending a horror story within the World War II ambience.

Available on DVD and VHS from RCA Home Video.

KING OF THE ZOMBIES

(Monogram 1941)

One of the first pictures to feature renegade Nazis on a remote island (others being *Ske Demons* and *Madman of Mandarins*, aka *They Saved Hitler's Brain*), Dick Purcell, John Archer, and Mantan Morland are stranded on Henry Victor's *Zombie* infested island, which in the reality of the Monogram jungle is a Nazi outpost. Victor's role of Dr. Miklos Sangre was originally intended for Lugosi. Instead, Lugosi did *Impossible Ghost*, which originally had working titles of "The Maniac," "Murder by the Stars," "The Phantom Monster," and began production as "The Phantom Killer." *King of the Zombies* was released a month after *The Invisible Ghost* (May 1941), and could be considered a horror comedy, due to Mantan's buffoonery and semantic samurai antics. The wartime Nazi angle hovers on the periphery of the plot, which revolves around Mantan's frantic attempts to avoid being "zombified." Purcell and Archer are highly effective in their dual good-guy roles, and the production and cinematography are of better than average Monogram vintage.

Available on VHS from various companies, and on DVD from Roan (out of print) and Alpha Video.

GHOST ON THE LOOSE

(Monogram 1943)

Once again the Germans get hammered, verbally, physically, and metaphorically, when they meet up with Monogram's best homeland security (or insecurity if you prefer), the Eastside Kids. Led by Leo Gorcey, who has a shotgun mouth full of malapropisms, Lugosi and his Poverty Row Nazis are run ragged by the world's oldest teenagers. The plot would seem to be born out of leftover bathtub gin from Prohibition. The unwitting Nazis live next door to some nosy neighbors who just sold their house to Huntz Hall's sister (played by Ava Gardner in one of her first screen roles) and Rick Vallin. The nasty Nazis are cranking out propaganda leaflets on a mini printing press, and seem to have

no more threatening weapons of mass destruction other than the press and the subversive literature. Sam Katzman most probably wouldn't have coughed up the dough for any WMDs.

From *Ghosts on the Loose* there is the only Lugosi blooper known to exist, where the black kid, played by Sunshine Sammy Morrison (Hal Roach alumni), is dusting what he thinks to be a picture, but is in truth Lugosi spying on him through an empty frame. Lugosi sneezes and proclaims "Oh, shit!" While it sounds like Lugosi's voice, at the same time it definitely sounds looped. This could have been Bela's way to express his opinion about the quality of this movie! We'll never know.

If you're a fan of the East Side Kids, it's a fun romp, highlighted by Leo Gorcey laying out some of his most delicious mutilations of the King's English. Example: Stanley Stash Clemens and Sunshine Sammy steal a funerary wreath from a gangster's wake. They present it to Leo, who after close examination (and finding out the truth), proclaims "It's sacrilegious!" Another in-joke is Huntz Hall's visit to the police station, talking to veteran character man Jack Mulhall about the need for security at his sister's wedding, due to threats "by the Katzman mob."

Another film with low boilage on the World War II propaganda, and more concentration on the sight gags.

Available on VHS from several companies, DVD from Roan (out of print) and from Alpha Home Video.

SPY SMASHER

(a Republic serial in 12 chapters 1942)

Nazi saboteurs are infiltrating our America, and softening our defenses. Luckily for our side, Spy Smasher is on the job. Based on the Spy Smasher character's appearance in *Whiz* and *Spy Smasher* comics, the story takes place shortly before the outbreak of World War II.

Serial veteran Kane Richmond plays a dual role as Spy Smasher and his twin brother, Jack, who take on Nazi super-villain The Mask. This serial is loaded with Lydecker special effects; some of the greatest fight scenes ever committed to chapter film; and a taut, believable story (insofar as movie serials are based on very little plot and high action content). One of this reviewer's top three Republic serials, with an unusual twist that one of the protagonists actually dies, stays dead, and is not revived in a future chapter.

Video availability is dodgy. Nostalgia Merchant released it on video in the early '80s. Republic Video and N.T.A. Video released it several times after that. It is now a well out of print, and a sought-after item on eBay.

THE MASKED MARVEL

(A Republic serial in 12 chapters 1943)

After losing the rights to produce a Superman serial, which Republic wisely recycled the plot into *The Mysterious Dr. Satan* (which substituted The Copperhead, a Republic creation, for the Superman character), Republic created their second original character with the Masked Marvel. In his one and only serial outing, the Masked Marvel battles the dastardly Japanese spy Sakima, played by *Little Rascals* veteran Johnny Arthur (non-Oriental), as what is basically a reworking of the plot line of the first *Lone Ranger* serial (Republic 1938).

Five insurance investigators, who all happen to be wearing the same gray suit throughout the 12 chapters, are the focus of the mystery of which one is the Masked Marvel, while doing battle in a myriad of some of Republic's standout fights, pulse-pounding effects, and somewhat dubious original ideas for a Republic homegrown character. If the viewer can get into a '40s vibe while watching this serial, the rewards are great.



The Masked Marvel



ANTI-TERRORIST?

A terrific supporting cast, including Louise Currie (co-star of *The Adventures of Captain Marvel*, *The Ape Man*, and *Voodoo Man*), William Forrest, Anthony Warde, and due to a clerical error, the unbilled stunt man/character actor Tom Steele, who portrayed the Masked Marvel throughout the 12-chapter duration.

Another example of enemy cells creeping into the Homeland, only to be repelled by the homegrown superhero, the Masked Marvel. While pretty straightforward and lacking the propaganda and inflammatory racial content of Columbia's *The Batman* serial, *The Masked Marvel* can be viewed for sheer thrills alone.

So what does all this editorial diatribe mean at the end of the day in our terror-stricken new millennium? What it means is that there is nothing new under the sun. There are only different ways to view information. While the terrorism of World War II seemed to follow the Queensbury Rules of Boxing, the terrorists of modern times have no rules at all. This includes domestic terrorism, international terrorism, and the terrorism that is in between our own ears. For all of our technological advances, a review of cinema culture and other archaeological information reveals as a civilization, we haven't progressed that much. Or should we say, not as much as our collective conscious egos would have us believe. In reality, the only changes we can make to end terrorism of all sorts, begins within ■

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the brody bunch:



Unforgettably Overdone, Incredibly Gruesome

There's an astonishing moment towards the end of the supremely eerie oddball horror sleeper *Tourist Trap* where Jocelyn Jones dispatches Chuck Connors by planting an axe right in the nape of his neck. Connors falls onto his knees, groans, clutches the axe, rolls his eyes, opens his mouth, dribbles blood down his chin, closes his mouth, opens his mouth again, and then slumps over dead. This is the sort of deliciously drawn-out attention-grabbing death scene that once witnessed isn't easily forgotten. The reason is because Connors has expertly performed what's known in professional thespian parlance as "doing a Brody."

Reportedly, there was an actor named Brody (or "Brodie"—maybe it was Steve Brodie—anyone know?) who gained a certain notoriety for outrageously overacting death scenes in plays. Brody did this schtick so often that pretty soon performing a death scene to the juicy hammy hilt became known as "doing a Brody." So with that quick explanation out of the way, please allow me to entertain you with the following gleefully ghoulish and inexhaustible catalogue of instances where an actor or actress does a Brody in movies both famous and infamous alike.

JAMES CAGNEY does an all-time rip-roaring classic Brody when he joyfully exclaims "Made it, Ma! Top of the world!" just before he gets blown to smithereens in *White Heat*.

MARGARET HAMILTON shrieks a tasty eardrum-rupturing Brody by screaming "I'm melting!" repeatedly after Judy Garland drenches her with a bucket of water in *The Wizard of Oz*.

SLIM PICKENS performs the funniest Brody in cinematic history when he whoops it up like a cowboy while riding a falling activated nuclear missile like a bucking bronco in *Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*. Slim later did two beautifully touching Brodies in a couple of Westerns; he dies in the company of his wife alongside a stream in *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* and

expires in frost of a campfire in the shamefully neglected horror-Western knock-out *The Shadow of Chikara*.

CANDACE HILLIGOSS impresses with a masterfully well-sustained feature-length Brody when she dies by drowning in a river at the very start of the subtly spooky *Carnival of Souls* and spends the rest of the film in a blank, catatonic, uncomprehending trance completely oblivious to

by joe wawrzyniak



& Memorably Moving Death Scenes in Movies

the fact that she's actually dead.

WILLIAM HOLDEN, ERNEST BORGNINE, BEN JOHNSON, and WARREN OATES all contribute amazing blood-spilling Brodies when they put up one hell of a fiery fight before going out in a hail of gunfire at the bravura slow motion climax of Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*.

Former wrestler turned actor **LENNY MONTANA** does a divinely grueling Brody when he makes these hideous gurgling noises and hugs his eyes out of their sockets while being garrotted in *The Godfather* (the latter's a neat trick Lenny learned back in his grappling in the ring days). Method man **MARLON BRANDO** slays the audience with an even better brilliantly improvised and extraordinarily effective Brody in the same film when he succumbs to a sudden massive heart attack while playing in a garden with his grandson.

ROBERT WAGNER makes like Bruce Jenner with a particularly incendiary Brody when he catches blaze while running through a flame-sprinkled office building in *The Towering Inferno*.

PAUL NEWMAN has twice done a Brody with completely on-target results: he serenely smiles after being fatally shot in the throat in *Cool Hand Luke* (a Brody of

such exceptional caliber that George Kennedy actually does a lovely eulogy about it) and tells Tom Hanks "I'm glad it was you" right before Hanks shoots him dead in *Road to Perdition*.

CHARLTON HESTON astounds with an amazingly audacious Brody when he dies in a fountain with his arms outstretched as Jesus Christ on the cross in *The Omega Man*.

Chronically jittery and neurotic character therapist **JOHN DAVIS CHANDLER** shakes his funky junkie groove thing with a terrifically tripped-out flyin' high-on-dope Brody when he gets pumped full of bullets by the cops on top of a staircase in *Whiskey Greife's* splendidly schlocky drug deal ripper *The Hooked Generation*: he rolls down the stairs, gets up, gasps "I'm indestructible," falls through a window, and takes a spill off a balcony before finally biting the big one in

delectably brain-melting snored to the world hophead festoon! Moreover, Chandler appeared in the Sam Peckinpah Westerns *Ride the High Country* and *Major Dundee*, both of which he naturally winds up exiting hot lead in. In *The Shadow of Chikara* John gets done in with a bunch of arrows. Clint Eastwood blows him through a barn door in *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, and none other than Connie Stevens (!) blasts him into the

next dimension in *Scorchy*. Poor John even gets offed in the more recent direct-to-video fright film sequels *Carnosaur 2* and *Phantom III: Lord of the Dead*. Furthermore, Chandler also acted in two other movies for Greife where twice again he fails to make it to the ending credits alive and intact. Richard Jeacock does him in with a spear gun in *Maker: Jew of Death* and John goes down in a customary hail of bullets at the violent climax of *Whiskey Mountain*. In other words, John Davis Chandler qualifies as the sniveling unsung blonde equivalent to Elisha Cook, Jr.

MARIE WINDSOR wins the Finest Brody of '56 Award when she exclaims "My whole life has been a bad joke with no punchline" right after Elisha Cook, Jr. shoots her in *The Killing*.

Profane greasemonster **GENE HACKMAN** hits a Brody right out of the ballpark when he curses out God just prior to meeting his maker in *The Poseidon Adventure*. **SHELLEY WINTERS** likewise puts her full weight into a downright stellar Brody when she succumbs to a sudden heart attack in the same film. And speaking of Ms. Winters, I might as well mention the fabulously frenzied full-throttle don't go down without a fight Brody

Strickin' Shelley delivers with literally both barrels blasting at the hysterical conclusion of Roger Corman's *Bloody Mama*.

Macho sea salt **ROBERT SHAW** Brodies his swaggering hyper-masculine ass off when he gets eaten by the giant shark in *Jaws*.

RUSS TAMBLYN did three really rippin' off-the-wall campy Brodies for Al Adamson: he runs around in a little circle after being stabbed with a pitchfork in *The Female Bunch*, makes a hellacious spout on pained facial grimace when Gary Kent tosses a knife into his neck in the enjoyably grungy biker flick *Satan's Sadists*, and, in a totally aces bird flippin' Brody, gives a cop who's just mortally shot him the finger as he's dying in *Black Heat*.

FILILEEN BRENNAN does a total beauty of a Brody when she gets savagely killed by the ferocious demonic mooster in the socko sicko beastbath *Jaspers Creepers*.

Glassy-eyed escaped homicidal lunatic **MICHAEL VILLELLA** caps off the rousing climax of *The Slumber Party Massacre* with a beautifully bent, batty, and berserk don't do down without a fight Brody: He has both the elongated bit on his deadlly portable drill and his right hand cut off (he proceeds to beat the girl who hacked his hand off with the grisly stump!) before falling into a pool which turns bright red with his freshly spilt blood only to climb out and finally be run through with a machete!

ANDREW PRINE has Brodied it up to the point where you think he's going to give himself a nosebleed on three humiliating occasions: Tiffany Bolling stabs him to death with his own knife in *The Centerfold Girls*, he gets fatally beahugged in William Girdler's *Grizzly*, and drowns in quicksand in *The Evil*.

A recent way bitchin' Brody was done by **MATTHEW MCCONAUGHEY** when Matt emits a bloodcurdling high decibel rebel yell after jumping off a tower to kill a dragon with an enormous battle axe in the fantastical *Reign of Fire*.

The frequently killed **PAUL WINFIELD** embarrasses himself somethin' rotten with his single most ignominious Brody when he pitifully screams like a girl as he's being devoured by carnivorous mutant killer cockroaches in the laughably abysmal sci-fi post-ouke clunker *Damnation Alley*.

NICHOLAS WORTH doesn't disappoint with a superlative glass-shattering Brody that has him crashing through a window in show-stopping slow motion after

he's filled full of lead by a cop in the terrifically trashy psycho pic hoot *Don't Answer the Phone*.

SOME PISS-POOR NO-NAME FAT LADY ACTRESS commits one of the worst, most pathetically unconvincing and unintentionally hilarious Brodies in bad fright film history when she kicks it from a sudden massive heart attack after seeing a pool of fake-looking blood seep under a door in the entertainingly atrocious *Track of the Moonbeast*.

RUTGER HAUER does an exquisitely affecting Brody when he eloquently articulates a stunningly poetic monologue prior to expiring at the touching conclusion of *Blade Runner*. **JOANNA CASSIDY** likewise performs a perfectly poignant Brody when she lets a lone tear run down her cheek as she's dying in the same film.

DON STROUD delivers a smashing defiant Brody when he looks at Brenda Vaccaro directly in the face, narrows his eyes, and gives a leering grin just before Brenda runs him down with a car in the superior *Last House on the Left* copy *Death Weekend*.

ZALMAN KING pulls out all the stops with a delectably histrionic Brody when he gets his just brutal desserts at the violent climax of the sublimely nasty/tightly grindhouse nugget *Trip With the Teacher*.

Psychologist **STUART LANCASTER** gives his substantial all with a bad-ass Brody that can't be beat when gorgeous go-go dancer Susan Stewart chops him into bloody bits with a meat cleaver in the phenomenally trippy psychedelic psycho-scream *Mantis in Lace*.

DEL CLOSE and **BURGESS MEREDITH** throw everything they have into one immensely cookin' double-whammy Brody when they get devoured together by the titular glutinous gelatinous alien maws in *Beware! The Blob*: Del fruitlessly tries to stab off gooey to death with a pitchfork while Burgess pours a bottle of hooch on the writhing pile of people-gobbling sentient glop.

Poor **Haji** goes out with one of the grodiest Brodies in '70s exploitation movie history when a plastic-explosive diaphragm causes her to blow up somethin' messy when she has an orgasm (!) in the profoundly putrid *Ilsa: Harem Keeper of the Oil Sheiks*.

Disgusting fat-ass psycho slob **DENNIS BURKLEY** overmetes for all its worth with a wondrously wicka-wacka Brody when he gasps "Why? Why? Why?" after Carol Speed pumps several rounds into his flabby girth at the uproariously out-of-control climax of *Bummer!*.

Stupendously stacked stripper **ANGELIQUE PETTYJOHN** gives viewers an awesomely abundant eyeful with a boner-poppin' totally nude Brody when she

kills a nefarious obese spy while clad solely in her birthday suit before dying herself in *The GI Executioner*.

NEVILLE BRAND has done a quartet of direct ball's eye Brodies that I'd be a fool not to mention in this here article: Neville's devoured by a crocodile in Tobe Hooper's *Eaten Alive*, blown away by Adam Roarke in *This Is A Hijack!*, literally turned into mince meat by a great grinder in *Psyche Killer*, and, my personal all-time favorite, gets blown to bits while masturbating in his garage rec room to a grumpy 8mm stag movie of his wife dancing naked when Chuck Connors tosses a lit stick of dynamite through an open window in *The Mad Bomber*.

WILLIAM KERWIN leaves viewers rolling in the aisles with an astonishing gut-busting Brody when he gasps "You crazy kid" after a little boy runs him through with a sword in *Impulse*.

JAMES REMAR growls out a great grumbling Brody when he incredulously exclaims "I don't believe it - I got shot!" to Nick Nolte after Nolte pops him one in the chest in *48 Hrs.*

Perennial spaghetti splatter film whipping boy **JOHN MORGHEN** was the reigning King of the Brodies in early '80s Italian horror features: Morghen had his head turned into a mushy pulp by a giant drill in Lucio Fulci's *The Gates of Hell*, has the top of his skull lobbed off so a tribe of vengeful flesh-eaters can feast on his brain in *Make Them Die Slowly*, and, in his most gruesome (and hence greatest) death scene ever, gets a hole the size of a basketball blown into his abdomen by a shotgun-wielding National Guardsman in *Cannibal Apocalypse*.

Another perpetually victimized thespian who did that Brody thing with commendable finesse is the criminally obscure and underappreciated **VICTOR ISRAEL**. Israel's three finest Brodies are getting his brain drained by the rampaging alien in *Horror Express*, being impaled by the titular monster in *The Sea Serpent*, and taking at least a dozen rounds in his simple torso before someone finally pogs a cap in his dome in *Night of the Zombies*.

WILLIAM BUTLER is our third frequent fright film thespian who's Brodied his socks off in a steady succession of horror movies: Among the many bloody ways poor Bill has bought it are (1) being run through by Jason Voorhees with a tent spike in *Friday the 13th Part VII: The New Blood*, his head blowing up real good in *Arena*, a bolt of lightning frying him in *Spellcaster*, getting stretched on a rack by the titular pernicious reptilian fiends in *Ghoulies II*, impaled on a picket fence in *The Final Curtain*, having his throat cut in *Lady Avenger*, his skull being split open with a cement trowel in

Barred Alive, further fatal cranial damage, this inflicted with a sledgehammer, in *Leatherface: The Texas Chainsaw Massacre III*, and a bunch of flesh-noshing zombies ravenously devouring his crispy remains after Bill's barbecued by a fire in the *Night of the Living Dead* remake.

IDA LUPINO goes down like a trooper by hacking a giant rat right in the face with a large meat cleaver only to have the savage oversized rodent rip her throat out in *The Food of the Gods*.

ROBERT DOWNEY, JR. lets it all hang out with an extremely flamboyant full-tilt boogie Brody by singing a full-throated operatic bellow right before he's blown away by Juliette Lewis and Woody Harrelson in *Natural Born Killers*.

LESLIE NIELSON erupts like a tropical volcano with a gloriously gaudy gettin' in touch with your inner raging beast Brody when he makes the grave error of wrestling an angry grizzly bear in William Girdler's *Day of the Animals*.

Besutuous porno starlet KELLY NICHOLS pulls off an alarmingly appalling Brody when psycho superintendent Cameron Mitchell does her in with a nailgun in the sensationally sleazy slasher favorite *The Toolbox Murders*; to make matters a tad more repellent Mitchell first shoots one nail right through Kelly's torso and then plants another nail firmly in the base of her skull! What makes this startling sequence so jarring is the fact that the monstrously unpleasant kill scene is ingeniously off-set by a gorgeously lilting country and western ballad called "Pretty Lady" playing on the soundtrack as this jaw-dropping splatter spectacle unfolds. (I'm sure Quentin Tarantino got the idea for using the fluffy bubblegum pop tune "Stuck in the Middle With You" to accompany the infamous ear-slicing sequence in *Reservoir Dogs* from this scene.) CAMERON MITCHELL himself does a particularly kickin' Brody at the end of the film when equally zesty nephew Wesley Eure stabs him to death with a kitchen knife.

The late, great BRUNO LAWRENCE does a nicely very and low-key Brody when he takes a fatal bullet meant for James Wainwright and asks Wainwright "I saved your life, didn't I boss?" right before he expires in the nifty post-nuke sci-fi actioner *Warlords of the 21st Century*.

Wackjob reclusé writer LES TREMAYNE comes through with one hilariously historic over-the-top ripe Brody when he hysterically yells "This is the scene where the hero kills the monster! Die! Die! Die!" right before one of the titular subhuman subterranean monsters bags his berserker ass in the wonderfully wretched Grade-Z howler *The Slime*

People.

A marvelously manic DON GORDON performs a gloriously gonzo, sweaty, open up and let it all pour out loudly screaming dilly of a Brody by ranting and raving like an absolute lunatic prior to having his head torn off by a murderous hairy humanoid creature in *The Beast Within*.

HAROLD SAKATA rivets you to your seat with a blisteringly hot live-wire Brody when he absorbs a lethal overdose of ampage during the genuinely electrifying conclusion of *Goldfinger*.

THE DOOMED LAB ASSISTANT WITH THE LAME, WITHERED ARM scores with an incredibly gory and protracted pre-splatter era late-50s Brody when the one-eyed monster in the closet tears his useless appendage right out of its socket in *The Brain That Wouldn't Die*. What makes this baby such a great Brody is the fact that the poor guy takes at least three minutes to bleed to death and even paints the walls red with his blood. You'll get no arguments from me on this honey; it's truly a Brody for the history books.

Belligerent nutcase 'Nam vet JOHN FRIEDRICH lets his freak flag fly high with a really funky-ass hallucinatory Brody when he gets killed by a deranged backwoods cannibal while tripping on mushrooms in the solid Friday the 13th cash-in *The Final Terror*.

The sadly neglected sci-fi/horror pip *Without Warning* features three down and out hambone actors Brodying their pants off with crackerjack results: CAMERON MITCHELL makes like Lenny Montana with the bug eyes when he buys it, MARTIN LANDAU blurs and bubbles with deliciously unrestrained relish before a tall, deadly, bubble-headed alien hunter snuffs his wacko ass, and JACK PALANCE hollers "Alien!" with utmost lip-licking panache as he charges at the evil extraterrestrial prior to tackling the pemicious intergalactic fiend like a football running back.

CHRISTOPHER LEE did Brodies so well at the end of several Hammer horror films that he essentially had them down to a science. Among my favorites are his recollecting when Peter Cushing points a cross made out of two candlesticks at him in *Horror of Dracula*, drowning in running water at the stirring conclusion of *Dracula - Prince of Darkness*, and getting torn to shreds in a razor-sharp thorn bush in *The Satanic Rites of Dracula*.

Jolly hayseed cannibal farmer RORY CALHOUN at the stupendous end of *Motel Hell* makes an immediate bee-line to the Rouserously Rip-roaring Brody Hall of Fame with the following immortal last breath confession: "I'm the biggest hypocrite of all - I

used preservatives."

Unsung horror movie hambone HY PYKE shreds his larynx with a first-rate boiler at the top of your lungs Brody when he's attacked by a swarm of backwoods bloodsuckers in the bang-up vampire gem *Lemora - A Child's Tale of the Supernatural*.

Vicious pimp YAPNET KOTTO brings the house down with an ardously drawn-out corker of a Brody when he dies behind the wheel of his car in painful slow motion after being pumped full of lead by rugged bounty hunter Isaac Hayes in the excitingly chaotic hospital shoot-out blood-bath climax of the crackerjack blaxploitation blast *Track Turner*.

DAVID HESS clocks in with an unintentionally funny overwrought Brody when he makes a really freaky face after being shot in the gut at the brutal conclusion of the unsparingly harsh *Last House on the Left* clone *The House on the Edge of the Park*.

The gore-soaked ALIEN rip-off *Galaxy of Terror* boasts two forgetfully ghastly Brody death scenes. I'll never forget the outrageously tasteless image of lovely lass TAFEE O'CONNELL being doinked to death by a lascivious giant worm. Ditto the moment where ERIN MORAN gets eviscerated and explodes. And the same thing goes for the alien monster in *Forbidden World* who does a righteously repulsive chunk-blowin' Brody by literally puking its guts out after eating a canorous liver!

ERIN TABOR - as the most hateful and brutish of the four rapists in the still-quite-disgusting-after-all-these-years revenge-for-a-rape pissier *I Spit on Your Grave* - does a positively mortifying howling-at-the-top-of-his-lungs-in-severe-pain scrotum-shriveling Brody when he needs to death in a bathtub after Camille Keaton calmly castrates him with a steak knife.

A FOXY TOPLESS COLLEGE COED has one of the most humiliating Brodies in '80s slasher movie history when she wets her pants prior to being cut in half by a chainsaw-wielding psycho in the wholly abhorrent body count opus *Pieces*.

Director Brian De Palma has encouraged cast members in his movies to do a Brody on several noteworthy occasions. GARRIT GRAHAM does a hysterically sick-humored Brody when he gets electrified while performing rock music live on stage in *Phantom of the Paradise*. PIPER LAURIE Brodies her gasping, heaving, amazingly eye-rolling heart out when Sissy Spacek telekinetically impales her to a doorway with various sharp kitchen implements in *Carrie*. JOHN CASSAVETES pulls off a magnificently messy Brody when he blows up in a splendidly splatterific man-

ner at the literally explosive conclusion of *The Fury*. Last and best of all, **AL PACINO** delivers a bracing, firing-with-both-barrels, delightfully demented doppeldoppel Brody when he's shot to pieces while stoned out of his skull on coke at the tour de force end of *Scarface*. Al earns bonus points for boltering the following killer line with topmost scenery-gnashing aplomb: "Let me introduce you to my little friend!" Great stuff.

JOSEPH PILATO eschews restraint and subtlety for a thunderously powerful Brody that's so loud, ripe, and dynamic that it's an honest-to-Christ miracle he didn't spontaneously combust while in the middle of performing it when the zombies get him at the gore-drenched finale of George A. Romero's *Day of the Dead*. Pilato curses like a truck driver at the top of his lungs and even yells the incredible line "Choke on 'em!" as the zombies gorge themselves silly on his intestines. Now, that's truly a Brody to be reckoned with.

VINCENT PRICE has three truly outstanding Brodies to his legendary name. The way he pathetically cries "You're all freaks!" to the quasi-vampires after they run him through with stakes at the bleak ending of *The Last Man on Earth* never fails to bowl me over. I'm also quite partial to Vincent's closing line in *The Offspring*, sputtering "Welcome to Oldfield, Tennessee" after Susan Tyrell tosses a knife into his neck. And watching Ian Ogilvy back Price to pieces with a large axe during the gruesome conclusion of Michael Reeves' remarkable *The Witchfinder General* always makes for damn pleasing viewing.

Veteran character actor **HARRY DEAN STANTON** also has three tremendous Brodies to his inestimable credit. Harry getting offed by the titular interstellar beastie while poking around a spaceship cargo bay for a missing cat in *ALIEN* and the way he blows up real good after stepping on a landmine in *Escape from New York* are certainly up to snuff, but Harry's piece de resistance Brody happens in the '73 *Dillinger*. Harry stumbles around an empty small town main street and repeatedly yells "Son of a bitch!" after taking a bullet in the gut. A bunch of guys armed with shotguns encircle Harry and proceed to unmercifully ventilate his torso. Ouch!

RAY LOVELOCK is yet another three-time Brody champ. Ray was sliced to death by witches in *Queens of Evil*, filled full of lead by vicious asshole cop Arthur

Kennedy in *Breakfast at the Manchester Morgue* (Kennedy bitterly snarls "I wish the dead could come back to life, you bastard, so this way I could kill you again!" after fatally blasting Lovelock), and got just what he deserved when a bunch of vindictive girls armed with rakes decide to open up a king-sized can of stomp-ass brutality on Ray's hide at the violent conclusion of the exceedingly scuzzy *Last House on the Left* rip-off *Terror*.

Eighties trash hoerer scream queen **LINNEA QUIGLEY** did quite a few notable Brodies while at the height of her fright film fame, shrieking her considerable lungs out whenever she goes breakin' on through to the other side. Among Linnea's best-ever Brodies are being impaled on reinder antlers while topless in the sicko Santa seasonal slasher smasher *Silent Night, Deadly Night*, getting devoured by zombies in *Return of the Living Dead*, having her throat pierced by an over-stimulated shower nozzle in *Witchtrap*, and losing her head to a huge lethal beast in *Crepuscule*.

JAMES MASON is a particularly esteemed thespian with many a sterling Brody in his distinguished oeuvre. In *Genghis Khan* Mason gets chopped up, put in a sack, and dragged to his death. In *Lord Jim*, Mason was blown up by a canon loaded with gold. In the '73 made-for-TV version of *Frankenstein*, James was hoisted to a masthead and struck by lightning! In *Torpedo Boy* the much-mistreated British actor is in a boat that's sunk by an Italian submarine. Moreover, Mason did the Dutch act four times in a quartet of films: he commits suicide by taking poison in *Rommel*, drowns in a suicide pact in *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman*, walks into the ocean in *A Star Is Born*, and pulls the plug by jumping off a cliff in *The Upturned Glass*. If that's not quite bad enough, in several pictures poor James winds up fatally eating hot lead: he slowly bleeds to death after taking a bullet in the gut in *Cold Sweat*, gets blasted by runaway slave Richard Ward at the end of *Mandingo* (prior to buying it Mason bellows the following immortal line: "You crazy nigger! You loony black bastard!"), gets shot while dancing in *The Marzelle Contract*, and a pistol-packing David Soul snuffs him on a staircase in *Salem's Lot*.

Grotesquely malformed carnival freak **WAYNE DOBA** kicks out with an excruciatingly elongated bone-crunching pip of a Brody when he's turned into human ground round by immense mechanical gears at the gut-wrenching climax of Tobe Hooper's highly underrated *The Funhouse*.

SCATMAN CROTHERS did a pair of super-smokin' Brodies in a couple of horror features: he makes a terrific facial expression of pure shocked surprise when Jack Nicholson takes him out with an axe in

The Shining and sassily exclaims "I've got some shit in my truck that will take care of all your asses!" to a bunch of homungous people-gobbling rats right before the big nasty vermin have themselves a Seat snack in *Deadly Eyes*.

JON VOIGHT raises the art of the Brody to a heretofore untouched over-the-top campy zenith when he winks after being eaten and subsequently regurgitated by the giant killer snake in *Anaconda*. **DANNY TREJO** likewise contributes a hilariously goofy Brody when he makes this unbelievable wucky grimace after seeing a nail fly up into the air in slow motion in the same film.

LYNN LOWRY gracefully performs an amusingly whimsical Brody when she says "Oh" after being shot by National Guardsmen in George A. Romero's superbly nihilistic *The Crazies*.

EDWARD WOODARD does the most chilling Brody in British horror movie history by praying to God while being incinerated alive inside a gigantic wooden statue at the shocking conclusion of *The Wicker Man*.

OLGA KARLATOS is the hapless recipient of a particularly gut-wrenching Brody when she has her eye pierced with a splinter in nerve-wracking slow motion in Lucio Fulci's gore classic *Zombie*.

Wildman actor **BILL PAXTON** has an impressive troika of hysterically hoppin' Brodies on his resume. Both Bill's bowling up a storm while being pulled under the floor by the titular pernicious extraterrestrials in *Alien* and thrilling confrontation with a savage alien bounty hunter in a subway car in *Predator 2* are the definite full-throttle four-sheets-to-the-wind goods, but for my money Bill's best-ever Brody happens when he's turned into crispy bacon bits while hanging on to the hood of a speeding truck which jackknifes and explodes in *Near Dark*.

A ROUGH'N'TUMBLE ARMY SOLDIER performs a magnificently macho Brody when he sneers "Chew on this, slime-ball" before pulling the pin on a grenade in the stand-out '88 remake of *The Blob*.

MICKEY ROONEY outdoes himself with one of the All-time Most Insanely Overblown "Oh My God I'm Dying!" Brodies when Luana Anders turns the tables on him at the delicious end of the gloriously gonzo psycho pic *The Manipulator*, the Mick kicks the bucket with a fantastically flipped-out fire-breathing theatrical flair that's guaranteed to have you rolling on the floor.

ERNEST BORGNINE Brodies his lungs out when he's eaten by the rats in *Willard* and later pulled off an excruciating Brody by taking a slug in the back in painful slow motion in *Shoot*.

WILLIAM SMITH buys the man in

(CULT MOVIES)

rip-snorting style with a terrifically harrowing Brody when he looks up at Yul Brynner and venomously hisses "You and me, we're gonna go together...TOGETHER!" as he's dangling over the edge of a deep pit on a flimsy wire in the unjustly underacclaimed sci-fi post-nuke winner *The Ultimate Warrior*.

Burly backwoods psycho **JOHN HUNSAKER** gasps and wheezes up a Brody of monumental proportions when tiny Deborah Benson chokes him by shoving her arm down his throat at the shocking ending of the outstanding *Deliverance* variant *Just Before Dawn*.

Prissy art dealer **LEWIS FITZGERALD** delivers a nicely eloquent Brody by ruefully saying "I was supposed to die in France, not in the sewers of Paris" as he's about to be devoured by lethal carnivorous nocturnal aliens in the sensationally hard-edged sci-fi/horror corker *Pitch Black*.

It makes all the sense in the world to end this macabre article with a paragraph about **ELISHA COOK, JR.**, that fabulously fretful character actor who died so often in movies that he clearly deserves the honor of being crowned The All-time King of the Brody. Poor Elisha was famously shot down in the mud by vicious hired gun Jack Palance in *Shane*, likewise pumped full of lead in *The Killing*, knifed in *The Black Bird*, poisoned in *The Big Sleep*, shrunk in *Voodoo Island*, filled full of holes in *Hellzapoppin'*, and strangled in *Phantom Lady*. All those untimely exits certainly rate, but for me Elisha's single most satisfying Brody occurs in *Blacula* when a recently reawakened female vampire jumps him while he's talking on the phone. Shot in suitably strenuous slow motion and topped off by an excellent high-pitched scream, Elisha Cook, Jr. goes out with an exemplary elan that everyone else who does a Brody should naturally emulate to the best of their abilities.

(I want to give a special thank you to my good friend David, who gave me the wonderful title for this crazy piece.) ■



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When Sci-Fi Was In The Pink:

An Interview with Sidney Pink by David Hayes

"Might as well do this now, I don't know how much longer I've got left," joked the now-deceased Sid Pink during our September, 2000 telephone interview. Heralded as one of the industry's most daring, innovative and overlooked writer/director/producers, Sidney Pink spoke to me from his Florida home—not even hinting that the man behind *Angry Red Planet* (1959), *Journey to the Seventh Planet* (1962), *Bwana Devil* (1950) and *Repticus* (1961) was anything but your average retiree. As one of the first truly successful independent film producers in the United States and abroad, Sid Pink is in a league all his own.

After graduating from the University of Pittsburgh in 1936 with a degree in business administration, Pink traveled to the starry-eyed land of Hollywood. He eventually landed a job as Production Budget Manager with Phil Krasne's Grand National Pictures. While there, Pink worked with the great James Cagney and Tex Ritter. His first production for Grand National—and with Cagney—was

Something to Sing About (1937).

"I learned a great deal from Jimmy Cagney," said Pink. "He was an 'Old Show Business' kind of guy...undefeatable. He taught me things at Grand National that I used up until my last few pictures."

When Cagney resigned from Grand National, the ship was quickly sinking and Pink found work as a Production Manager with Harry Cohn's Columbia Pictures. Pink created the Production Budget Department at Columbia that would keep track of the production budget on every picture, with a detailed report delivered to Cohn everyday.

Cohn, a notorious blow-hard that treated people like dirt, called Pink into his office one day and threw a tantrum concerning the latest budget report (that Pink had not gotten to review yet).

"[In my own colorful language, I proceeded to tell Cohn off. He shut his mouth and stared at me while I out-yelled him. By the time I got to the second floor I was met at my

office with my paycheck and my employee pass was pulled."

Pink said goodbye to Columbia Pictures and Harry Cohn over a misplaced decimal point. Pink stayed out of filmmaking until 1950, and then came back with a vengeance. He made *Bwana Devil*, with Robert Stack, the world's first 3-D color movie. This would be just the tip of the iceberg for Sid Pink's role as a "film innovator."

Always "fascinated with science-fiction," Pink penned one of the most highly regarded science fiction epics of the fifties, namely, *Angry Red Planet*. Using a process called Cinemagic, Pink became the first director in the history of motion pictures to attempt to bring a viewing audience to the surface of another planet.

"It [*Angry Red Planet*] was written on my kitchen table. My kids were my critics, they'd tell me what was good and what just fell flat!"

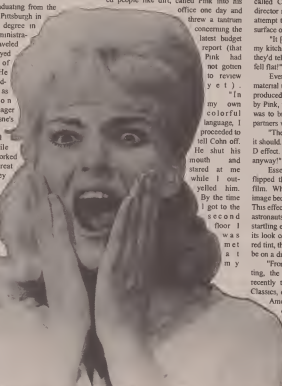
Eventually, Pink had enough "good" material to go into pre-production. Written, produced, directed and completely financed by Pink, the best that they were hoping for was to break even. He and his production partners were very pleasantly surprised.

"The damn Cinemagic didn't work like it should. It was supposed to be sort of a 3-D effect. What we came up with was great anyway!"

Essentially, the Cinemagic process flipped the positive and negative on the film. What would normally be a black image became a white image and vice versa. This effects process was used every time the astronauts visited the planet of Mars to a startling effect. It makes the planetside visits look completely surreal. Layered with a red tint, the audience could almost expect to be on a different planet.

"From the checks I still seem to be getting, the picture is still playing. I read recently that it was on American Movie Classics, on cable." *Angry* was released by American International Pictures headed up by the notorious Sam Arkoff.

"Arkoff and I had a working relationship. Neither of us trusted the other... which worked out well because I wouldn't touch him with a ten foot pole. Jimmy Nicholson was the brains of that opera-



Repticus (1961)



tion. With Arkoff, you never got a straight count." Although *Angry Red Planet* was a great success by independent standards, Pink never really got the return on the picture that would have been his due with normal, non-Hollywood accounting.

Pink left sci-fi for a while, but then made a distinct return with *Journey to the Seventh Planet*. "Journey was a delight for me. For the first time I was able to do exactly what I thought needed be done, without other approvals. As the author, director and producer, my only limitation was my pocketbook and my imagination." *Journey* went into production before Pink's other sci-fi/monster films (*Angry* and *Reptilicus*) had begun to make any money. Still in Denmark from a previous production, Pink decided to film there with the \$75,000 in his account. The first problem that *Journey* ran into was the spaceship set. "How do you build a spaceship in a country that scoffs at the very idea of it? That's where my burlesque stage experience came in very handy." Pink placed a few grills in the walls, gathered a few sound meters from his sound technician and posted "Starboard" and "Port Atomic Engine" signs in the room. Instant starship.

"The idea for the story [of *Journey*] came from a theory I had read, that the human brain is so complex and vast in its potential that no human has ever been able to use more than twenty percent of its capacity... I love that story and regret

to this day that I didn't nurture it more and give it the kind of budget and production values it really deserved. To my dying day I shall maintain that *Journey* was and is a great sci-fi story, and at the considerable risk of being called

ego-
tistical, I must assert that the rip-offs of my story only help to prove its universality and fascination. I have seen the *Star Trek* cycle succumb with

less worthy scripts."

Pink's "hobby of science fiction" took him from a little hamlet in Denmark to Mars, Uranus and to the center of the earth with *Reptilicus* ("a real monster of a picture, no pun intended").

Pink followed *Journey* by producing and/or directing a score of highly regarded films including *The Castilian* (1962, with Cesar Romero), *Reptilicus* (still playing today on television, and a prestige format screenplay book has just been released with some great never-before-seen pictures), *Madigan's Millions* (1968, having the dubious honor of being Dustin Hoffman's earlier film work) and *The Man from O.R.G.Y.* (1970, Sid Pink's disastrous, and only "attempt at sex," on film).

Pink has also written an autobiography, titled *So You Want to Make Movies: My Life as an Independent Film Producer*, which was published in 1989 by Pineapple Press, Inc. and is still available.

During the period during which our interview was conducted, Sidney Pink was "enjoying his retirement," and he said he occasionally made it out to a couple of film conventions each year. And in order to stay at the top of his game, Pink wrote weekly and monthly columns for *The Senior News* and Florida's *The Broward County News*.

Sadly, Sidney Pink passed away late in 2002 before the publication of this article.

He will be fondly remembered for his contributions to the film industry. ■

Reptilicus

There she sat, on a stool not six feet from me, in the University of Florida infirmary: The delicious Victoria Principal, a 22-year-old vision from heaven – from Hollywood, actually – in a white, tight-clinging see-through blouse and mini-skirt.

Did I mention I was in my underwear?

It was the spring of 1972 – my sophomore year at the University of Florida – and I was making my film debut, playing one of 20 army draftees (stripped to our skivvies) undergoing a pre-induction physical in *The Naked Ape*, a major motion picture being filmed on campus.

As we waited for the next scene, Ms. Principal crossed her legs and swept a wisp of hair from her eyes. When she finally spoke, her words etched indelibly into my id: "The camera is the perfect lover," she purred. "It gives to you exactly what you give to it." We swooned.

The director, Donald Driver – a wispy, wiry, nervous sort – called, "Places everyone," and reminded us once again of the Extra's Holy Commandment: "Whatever you do, DO NOT LOOK AT THE CAMERA!" Then – "Action!"

We took our places. As extras we were simply human scenery, of course. Every so often, Driver would catch one of us peering into the camera's eye. "Cut!" he'd bark, then chew out the offender – "the camera does not exist!" he'd howl – and we'd run through yet another take.

No one knew it at the time, but Driver's *Naked Ape* was destined to become one of Hollywood's legendary Lost Movies. After a short run following its 1973 release, the



THE NAKED APE

film mysteriously vanished; today, over a quarter-century later, it remains almost entirely unseen. What happened?

FROM BOOK TO FILM

The movie version of the 1967 best-seller *The Naked Ape* was almost never filmed at all. Desmond Morris' book had explored human patterns of sex and aggression, trac-

ing them to our primal, simian roots. For years Morris had rejected offers to sell movie rights, convinced his quirky treatise – part textbook, part pop-anthropology – was unsuitable for filming.

Hollywood producer Zev Bufman thought otherwise. He flew to Morris' home on the Mediterranean isle of Malta and launched into his pitch. Morris interrupted.

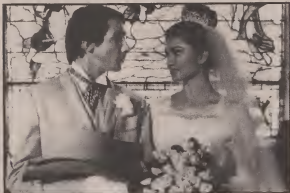
"Anyone who feels passionately enough to travel halfway around the world should have it," the author told him "It's yours."

Bufman turned to *Playboy* magazine magnate Hugh Hefner for financing. A deal was struck: *Playboy* and Universal Pictures would split the film's \$2 million budget.

Signing Principal was a coup. The former Miss Miami's rise to Hollywood sex-goddess was swift: Her 1972 film debut was opposite Paul Newman in *Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean*. (Principal's *Playboy* contract granted her the lead in *Naked Ape* provided she would pose for one of the mag's naughty pictorials. A six-page spread displaying Principal's earthly delights appears in *Playboy's* Sept. '73 issue, timed to the release of the movie).

PLAYBOY & UNIVERSAL'S LOST MOVIE

BY KEN BROOKS



Next to sign was Johnny Crawford, former original Mouseketeer and child star of TV's late-1950s series *The Rifleman*, as Principal's love interest. For *Naked Ape*, Crawford would play a college student facing the draft and a stint in Viet Nam; Principal would play the babe in Crawford's "Sexual Behavior" class.

BIG APE ON CAMPUS

Months before shooting commenced, Bufman began searching for a campus location. He liked UF, he said, because of "its different types of architecture, as if it could be any col-

lege, in any part of the country." In return, the state of Florida - eager to entice the Hollywood film industry - agreed to supply the production with limos and private planes.

Driver's 40-member production crew invaded campus on Monday, February 22. Ads were placed in the campus newspaper: Auditions for extras would be held at the UF auditorium.

As it turned out, Driver was merely looking for warm bodies with enough sense not to stare into the camera lens. The selection process, in fact, appeared random. Volunteers lined the stage, and a nod from Driver meant you were "in." Nearly 200 students were selected at the princely salary of \$15 a day.

I was present when Crawford arrived for his first scene, shot outside the university infirmary. When an extra complimented Crawford on his Hollywood-style lizard boots, the star looked stricken. His boots were totally out-of-character (de rigueur footwear on campus, '72: sneakers or sandals). "Who wears a size ten?" Crawford asked. There on the infirmary steps, Crawford whipped out a \$20 bill and bought an extra's beat-up high-tops. Our jaws went slack. \$20! To dorm-dwellers with pre-paid meal tickets, this was three month's living expenses. Welcome to big-time show-biz.

Campus filming took ten days. I was amazed to learn that Driver actually sat in a director's chair with his name across the back, and that "takes" actually began with a black-and-white slap-board. I paraded through the rest of my scenes with all the natural acting ability of a marionette.

**THE
NAKED APE**
is only human.



Based on the World-Wide
Best-Selling Book

UNIVERSAL and PLAYBOY present
**"THE NAKED APE" starring JOHNNY CRAWFORD
VICTORIA PRINCIPAL • DENNIS CULVER**
Written for the screen and directed by DONALD CRISP
Produced by ZV BUFMAN Executive Producer MORTIMER
A UNIVERSAL PLAYBOY PICTURE  **PG PARENTAL STRONG CAUTION**

Whatever became of *The Naked Ape's*... VICTORIA PRINCIPAL



On the strength of her debut in *Judge Roy Bean*, Principal took home the 1972 Golden Globe for "Most Promising Newcomer." Then came *Naked Ape*, and the starlet's career crashed and burned - "the darkest time of Victoria's life," according to her 1989 bio, *Victoria Principal*. "The Hollywood crowd was laughing behind their hands...at this little upstart who was sliding (into the) oblivion she so richly deserved."

Stung by criticism and deeply depressed, Principal actually quit the business and resigned from the Screen Actors Guild. "I cancelled auditions and stayed in bed all day," she recalls. By 1975, Principal accepted an offer from a theatrical agency to work as an agent. She represented, among others, Dick Martin of *Rowan and Martin*.

By 1978, Principal itched to return to acting and auditioned for the role of Pamela Ewing on a proposed new TV series: *Dallas*. The series was a smash, ran nine years, and put Principal back on top.

But it wasn't the big screen that beckoned. For the next two decades, Principal starred in a series of highly-rated made-for-TV movies.

These days, remote-welding couch potatoes can scarcely avoid the raven-haired vixen. Principal is a ubiquitous TV presence, hawking her line of beauty products and self-help books - a one-woman industry. She currently lives in Beverly Hills with her husband, Dr. Henry Glassman. (photo courtesy victoriaprincipal.com)



DID I MENTION I WAS IN MY UNDERWEAR?

A BRIEF, FLICKERING IMAGE

The movie, released in August 1973, was ignored by the nation's critics, most of whom didn't even bother to unsnap their typewriter covers. Among major dailies, only the *Los Angeles Times* bothered to publish a review:

"Based on the evidence before us," wrote *Times* critic Charles Champlin, "those who said that Desmond Morris' *Noked Ape* couldn't be made into a movie were right." Champlin called the film, "achingly tasteless." Hef's first foray into feature films was a bomb – a 500-pound daisy-cutter, in fact.

How bad was *Noked Ape*? This bad: Three decades after its release, the movie is still unavailable to the public in any format whatsoever. To his eternal humiliation, Hef created the counterculture equivalent of

Plan Nine from Outer Space – but by god this turkey wasn't going to wind up as some late-night art-house laughing stock.

The movie hasn't been seen since 1974. By now one has to assume the reels are locked away in a closet at Hef's place, crumbling inexorably into neat piles of acetate dust.

Recently, I contacted a leading internet source dealing in hard-to-find movies and inquired about the obscure object of my desire. "*Noked Ape* seems to have fallen off the ends of the earth," he told me. "You can't even find a bootleg copy. It's the film collector's Holy Grail."

I saw the movie only once, in the fall of 1973. I had graduated that spring and moved back home to Panama City, a resort town on Florida's panhandle. I checked newspaper

movie ads each day, until finally...

My first tip-off that *Noked Ape* had tanked big-time was this: It was shown at a local drive-in, second-billed to a motorcycle flick – a second-rate drive-in throw-away.

Ouch.

I went anyway, piling friends into my Plymouth Duster. For most of the movie we lust, tongues lolling, at Ms. Principal's exquisite visage. Suddenly, there I was! My image flickered on screen for a few seconds and vanished.

I felt a jolt of adrenaline nonetheless. I was officially a movie actor – appearing, I liked to add, alongside my voluptuous Victoria. But wait a second. That final moment I'm on screen – did you notice? Oh geez! I'm looking right into the camera! And did I mention I was in my underwear? ■

Whatever became of *The Noked Ape*'s... JOHNNY CRAWFORD

Best known for his role as Mark McCain, TV's teen-aged heartthrob in the 1950s western *The Rifleman*, Crawford was a veteran of over 250 television appearances and 15 movies by the time he appeared in *The Noked Ape*. Then, like Victoria Principal, Crawford fell victim to the Curse of the Ape – but not for long.



Eschewing acting, Crawford returned in the mid-70s to his first love: Music. He began touring smaller clubs, guitar in tow, belting out nostalgic favorites from the 1920s – like Tiny Tim, only with testosterone.

In the late '80s, Crawford joined the big band orchestra The Nighthawks as featured vocalist. Since 1990, Crawford has fronted his own band, the 16-piece Johnny Crawford Orchestra, playing dance music from the Roaring Twenties to packed crowds in up-scale Southern California supper clubs.

At one time a confirmed bachelor, Crawford was reunited with his high school sweetheart in 1990. Johnny and Charlotte married in 1995 (cue the strings, Johnny) and live in a 1920s-era home in the Hollywood Hills.

This fall, Crawford, 57, returns to the big-screen – sort of. The Johnny Crawford Orchestra's rendition of "Maybe It's You" will play over the closing credits on the forthcoming George Clooney flick *Welcome to Collinwood*. (photo courtesy celebhust.net)



The new issue of *Cult Movies Magazine* sees the dropping of the "Spotlight on Hollywood" column to be replaced by a more appropriate "Caidin's Cocktail Hour" feature. After lengthy deliberations, I felt "Spotlight on Hollywood" wasn't really living up to its name. Half of my ramblings concerned happenings outside of Hollywood and even California.

Caidin's Cocktail Hour

a new column
from our longtime
contributor,
Eric Caidin

When one thinks of a cocktail hour, what comes to mind? If your answer is: a largely informal gathering of people drinking and talking and gossiping about local and national events, then that's basically the description of my column. So without further ado, here we go...

• The 4th Annual Silverlake Film Festival returned to the Los Feliz and Vista Theaters Sept. 10th thru Sept. 18th. Film highlights of particular interest to me included the screening of a beautiful new 35mm print of the original *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) on Tuesday, September 16th at the Vista Theater. Star Kevin McCarthy can currently be seen doing a cameo in *Looney Tunes: Back in Action* carrying seed pods and muttering, "They're here."

• On Tuesday September 11th at the Vista Theater was a very special cast and crew screening of Eli Roth's first film, *Cabin Fever* - another horror hit for Lion's Gate. For those who missed it the first time around, be sure to get the DVD after it is released in January 2004. The film concerns a group of teens who come down with a bad case of the flesh eating virus. Lots of guts and gore courtesy of the ever reliable KNB Effects Group.

• A special screening of Paul Thomas Anderson's film *Hard Eight* Sept. 13th at the Vista had star John C. Reilly in person receiving a special Silverlake Film Festival Achievement Award. For more info on next year's Film Festival you can go online to www.silverlakefilmfestival.com.

• The Las Vegas Rockaround took place Sept. 26-28 at the Gold Coast Casino featuring 3 days and nights of bands encompassing the entire music genre. Headliners included Andre Williams and Rudy Ray Moore: two of the Raunch/R&B pioneers. Rockabilly was represented by The Paladins. The Polecats and Slim Jim Phantom. Psycho surf music was provided courtesy of Los Straightjackets and Johnny

Legend's own brand of musical mayhem knocked everybody out of their seats.

A few thousand in attendance from all over the world had a great time and a room full of vendors offered a little bit of everything for sale from photos and videos to clothing, sunglasses, hats and tiki collectibles. It was another fine show put on by the Viva Las Vegas folks. For more info on their upcoming shows including Viva Las Vegas during Easter Weekend, go online to www.vivalasvegas.net.

• The Ray Courts Hollywood Collectors and Celebrity Show held Oct. 4th and 5th at the Beverly Garland Holiday Inn hotel in North Hollywood was a huge success primarily due to the first-time guests including Phyllis Diller, Sybil Danning, Steve Railsback, Bret Halsey and Bill McKinney. Local celebrities and notables seen making the rounds include legendary casting director Marvin Paige and Hollywood activist Robert Nudelmann. Next show is scheduled for Jan. 17-18. For guest info, go online to www.hollywoodcollectorsshow.com.

• "Lucha Va Voom" returned to the Mayan Theater in downtown Los Angeles on Wednesday, October 29th featuring the best of classic burlesque and Mexican style "lucha libre" pro wrestling. Mexican wrestling legend "Mil Mascaras," star of over 20 horror movies (as well as being active in the rings since the 1960s), was featured along with La Parka and Hurricane Ramirez Jr. As this was also a very special Halloween show, a special match was set up featuring a Frankenstein monster battling live strippers. The Wrestling Chickens also made a special appearance: getting everyone ready for Thanksgiving. The

event was a sellout with over 1500 in attendance. For future shows, info and updates check out www.luchavavoom.com online.

• I recently returned from the annual Halloween Weekend Chiller Theater Show held at the Meadowlands Sheraton Hotel in East Rutherford, New Jersey. It was another outstanding show produced by Kevin Clement. Over 8000 people were in attendance. Featured guests included Sid Haig, star of *House of 1000 Corpses*, along with fellow cast member Bill Moseley. Steve Railsback, who made many memorable genre films including *Ed Gen, Helter Skelter* and *Lifeforce*, made his first East Coast appearance along with Keir Dullea, star of *2001* and *Black Christmas*.

Also in attendance at the Chiller Show was Russ Tamblyn. Besides being an alumnus of the George Pal classics *Tom Thumb* and *The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm*, he was also seen in *Satan's Sadists* and *The Hauling*.

Legendary producer Dave Friedman (producer of *Blood Feast* and 2000 *Maniacs*) was greeting the fans at the Something Weird booth along with Don Edmonds, director of the first two *Ilsa* films. Collaboration between Friedman and Edmonds for a new *Ilsa* film is in the works. More info on this groundbreaking announcement will be forthcoming.

Over 75 guests were present at the show acknowledged worldwide as the finest convention on the East Coast and possibly the country. Fangoria magazine has just announced a partnership with Kevin Clement in putting on all future Fangoria Weekend of Horrors Conventions. The first show coming up will be January 9-11th at the Meadowlands Sheraton Hotel in New Jersey. For more info on this and other shows, you can call 201-896-0500 or go online to www.Chillertheater.com.

• The Grandhouse Film Festival Series at the New Beverly Theater wound up the year with some real holiday treats. On Tuesday, November 18th, there was a double bill of Hammer Film's *The Seven Brothers* (and one sister) *Meet Dracula* with Roy Dennis Stockler's *The Thrill Killers* aka *The Maniacs* are Loose featuring Burlesque and cult film icon Liz Renay. December 23rd was a special holiday/Christmas package not recommended for the kids. Herschel Gordon Lewis infamous *Blood Feast* is paired with David Friedman's *She Freak*. Connie Mason, star of both *Blood Feast* and 2000 *Maniacs* was scheduled to appear to introduce *Blood Feast* and do a short Q&A. For more information on screenings and events at the Beverly Theater, call 323-938-4038.

That's about all for now folks. See you next issue and have a drink on me. ■

Death Collector

The Greatest Low-Budget Sci-Fi Film Nobody has Seen/Hear/About/Discovered/Celebrated

A little bit of style can go a long way. Sadly, that's a lesson that low-budget action cinema forgot about twenty years ago. Pick up a video copy of (or watch an off-hours cable airing of) most any recent film starring C-listers Michael Dudikoff, C. Thomas Howell, Jeff Fahey, or Lance Henriksen and you'll see what I'm talking about. The camera angles, production design, plotting, use of music, and characterizations are about as going-through-the-motions perfunctory as you can get. It's almost as if the directors and producers of these films were so concerned that their low-budget movies not look amateurish that they entirely forgot to inject even the tiniest smidgen of individual style.

So when a low-budget action film does break from this trend — as did Robert Rodriguez's *El Mariachi* (1992) — it can garner a cult following and even approach art-film status simply because it displays a sense of style. That being the case, the equally stylish *Death Collector*, a 1988 sci-fi actioner, should too have a cult following and reputation. But

perhaps the stigma attached to low-budget sci-fi has kept this 16mm direct-to-video opus from being seen for its many merits; sadly, *Death Collector* remains little known and little seen.

The Prologue

It took me two scrapped magazine article ideas to happen upon *Death Collector*. I was researching for an article to be titled "Futuristic TV Death Sports In Film," which examined *Rollerball*, *Death Race 2000*, *The Running Man*, and films of that ilk. That led me to a 1989 film entitled *Game of Survival* which, judging by the video jacket, looked as if it fit into the "Futuristic TV Death Sports" subgenre. I watched it. It didn't.

But *Game of Survival* inspired another article. Distributed by RaeDon Home Video, this cinematic disasterpiece (although touted as "RaeDon's all-time classic action extravaganza") featured lousy post-dubbed sound, charisma-free performances, unintelligible camera work, and sub-amateurish scripting. Style isn't even a consideration for something this crudely constructed. Indeed, *Game of Survival* was so perfectly awful I had to do what any glutton for B-Movie punishment would do: rent each and every film RaeDon put out.

Induced into a semi-delirium, I forced my eyes to gaze upon the television screen as the video company's finest — *Alien Private Eye*, *Roller Blade Warriors*, *Nudity Required*, *Body Parts*, *Feelin' Screwy* — proved they were each as bad as the titles would seem to indicate. My article, tentatively dubbed "The Worst Movies Ever Made," was already shaping up in my head. It would ask the question, "How and where did RaeDon find this UberDreck?"

But on one fateful day I brought home *Death Collector*, another low-budget film to have the RaeDon logo emblazoned on its video box. I unexcitedly shoved the tape into my VCR, fully expecting another brain-rotting 90 minutes.

But I was surprised by the title sequence, which intercut somber credits and grave slide guitar with footage from old b&w B Westerns. I was already tipped off that this movie wanted to tell a classic, larger-than-life story of good versus evil. The film faded in on a '50s pickup truck riding through a rubble-filled urban wasteland. But inside the truck, a guitar was being tuned. And amidst all the blight, a sweet song was being sung:

You made breakfast,
I made the bed.
We were made for each other,
Everybody said.

A few minutes later, the occupants of the truck had dispersed with some baddies. And then a voice-over narration explained who the hell these people were and what the hell was happening. The narrator did a dead-on Rod Serling imitation, and it was another nod to the classic. After the narration, the music — sort of a 1980s take on a Western/surf instrumental — crescendoed. *Death Collector* had me hooked. I attentively watched the remainder of the film and enjoyed most all of it.

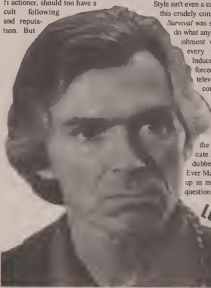
But then I wondered: Did I really enjoy *Death Collector* in its own right, or did I just enjoy it relative to the rest of the RaeDon video catalog? So I screened the film several more times. *Death Collector* held up.

The Plot

In a crumbling, possibly post-apocalyptic future, aimless musician Wade Holt (Daniel Chapman) relocates to Hartford City, where his lawman brother Jack (Frank Stewart) is fighting hard to protect the town from corrupt insurance mogul Hawk (Loren Blackwell). Ironically, Jack has a life insurance policy with Hawk's company.

Wade secures a job as a bar musician in a Hartford City saloon. But between performances, he dallies with Hawk's mistress (Ruth

Loren Blackwell is Hawk



CULT MOVIES

by Mike Malloy

Collins). Wade's irresponsible tryst endangers his brother — who is soon killed by Hawk's thugs — and lands Wade in jail with a 50-year sentence.

But five years into Wade's prison hitch, civilization further collapses. The penitentiaries are shut down, the convicts set free.

Returning to Hartford City, Wade still clutches the blood-stained life insurance policy his brother handed over in his dying moments. Wade wants to collect on it. But in the absence of Jack's law-enforcement, Hawk has become even more tyrannical, and he now forces the downtrodden Hartford City residents to constantly pay insurance premiums just so they may continue living.

Wade runs into Hawk as the insurance tycoon is making his collection rounds with his goons. Hawk refuses Wade an insurance settlement as Jack's beneficiary. Wade aint happy. Nor is he pleased when Hawk's thugs try to rub him out.

Enlisting the help of his erstwhile prison bunkmate and Hawk's sometime mistress, Wade penetrates Hawk's skyscraping high-security headquarters. The trio fights its way up level after level of the heavily guarded building. Reaching the top, Wade breaks into Hawk's office, brandishes his shiny Desert Eagle, and shoots dead the man responsible for his brother's murder.

At the end of the film, Wade finds Jack's tin star, and he gives it a Marshal Kane/Dirty Harry-style toss to the ground. But just before the end credits roll, Wade picks up the star and pins it to his jacket, prepared to take his brother's place as a lawman.

The Production

"I wanted to do a rock and roll, singing cowboy, futuristic movie. And I wanted to put Chris Isaak in it," says director Tom Gniaczowski of his original concept and casting ideas for *Death Collector*. "I wanted my modern-day Gene Autry."

Gniaczowski, who now works professionally as Tom Garrett, says he wanted to give retro-rocker Isaak a film role before it was fashionable to use the musician in movies; director Jonathan Demme would later put Isaak in *Morried to the Mob* and *Silence of the Lambs*.

Unable to secure that bit of dream casting (although Gniaczowski says he had been in talks with Isaak's agent), the director ultimately used East Coast film actor Daniel Chapman as the film's singing Western-style hero. When asked what would be different about *Death Collector*

had the film had a more substantial budget, Gniaczowski blurts almost involuntarily, "Chris Isaak!"

But with his ideas for a movie containing "swinging cowboys, hot rods — all this cool stuff," Gniaczowski contacted screenwriter John McLaughlin (now a million-dollar-per-script writer for Hollywood).

"I pitched it to the writer: Take Alan Rudolph's *Trouble in Mind* and match it

"I wanted to do a rock and roll, singing cowboy, futuristic movie. And I wanted to put Chris Isaak in it. I wanted my modern-day Gene Autry."

with a Gene Autry movie...but futuristic." Perhaps not coincidentally, Rudolph's 1986 New Wave Noir *Trouble in Mind* also features a character named Hawk.

Gniaczowski cites Spaghetti Westerns and the 1958 Robert Mitchum moonshine film *Thunder Road* as additional influences he wanted to be apparent in *Death Collector*.

Ironically, the initial funds for this tale of futuristic insurance villains came from an insurance settlement. Gniaczowski was involved in a traffic accident and received a reported \$30,000 insurance payoff. He used the money to fund a shoot in August, 1987.

"*Death Collector* was filmed as 'Tin Star Void,'" explains Philip Nutman, one of the movie's supporting players. "It was shot in and around the New Haven, Connecticut area in two separate shoots. The first was meant as a five-day trailer shoot — but turned into 12, if I remember correctly." Nutman says Gniaczowski's insurance settlement was "not enough to finance a feature, but enough to make a slack 10-15 minute trailer designed as a sales tool to raise the rest of the budget."

And that's just what they did. The trailer was taken to the Independent Film Market in New York, and completion funds were found through

Upfront
**Daniel Chapman
is Wade Holt**

Films and the Double Helix foreign sales company. Additionally, some private investors were found.

The film's principal shoot occurred in April, 1988. "Subway sandwiches for lunch and dinner!" recalls Nutman of the shooting conditions.

Gniaczowski's NYU film school chum Michael D. Lang joined the production between the first and second shoots. Previously, Lang had been the replacement editor on a 1987 horror film named *The Shylock*, a dreadful picture about an evil fella

running around with white shoe polish in his hair. Earlier in the '80s, Lang and Gniaczowski had made a trailer together for a spec film named "The Doomed," which was to star *Death Collector*'s Loren Blackwell.

"We came sooooo close to getting ['The Doomed'] made with Vestron, but that's another story," Lang sighs.

Although Lang's chief contribution to *Death Collector* would be during post production as the film's editor, he hung around the set during the second shoot and, with a film editor's eye, he was able



to suggest shots to help the film cut together better. In fact, Lang proposed some shots that pulled the entire climax together.

According to Lang, the crew had shot a day's worth of the script's climactic action: guerilla fighting in the hallways and staircases of Hawk's high-rise security building. But it wasn't until Lang was standing in a video resource room full of video monitors that he knew what additional shots were needed to make the climactic sequence work.

"We had nothing to tie it together," Lang says of the sequence. "And I look over at these video monitors, and this little light bulb goes on in my head. I said, 'We'll have [Philip Nutman's] character monitoring

Loren did stuff in Los Angeles and sent me the tape. It didn't always work."

When a finished cut was completed, three prints were struck. And although the title of this article touts *Death Collector* as a relatively unknown film, the movie did manage to find various outlets, audiences and notices in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Most importantly, *Death Collector* sold to video. Deals were brokered with Radeon for domestic video distribution and with Guild Home Video for distribution in the United Kingdom.

"It got picked up by Guild Home Video in Great Britain, while I was still living there," Nutman says. "And I walked into a

"Guild Home Video went on to release *Terminator 2* in Britain. They made a lot of money with a lot of crap like *Death Collector* and were able to get the rights to big, big Hollywood movies."

what's going on on all the floors."

So the security building footage was taken to the University of New Haven, where it was transferred to 3/4" tape. The tape was played on the monitors, and Nutman was lensed in the video room as he surveyed all the fighting.

"That pulled the whole ending together," figures Lang.

But the editor's work was just beginning. After the second shoot wrapped, he involved himself with the post-production, some of which was made difficult by the fact that the cast had dispersed to different states and abroad.

"A lot of the dialogue was post-dubbed," relates Lang. "And I had to get Phil to do stuff in England and send me a tape. And then I had to try to fit it in. And

48

Blockbuster Video in High Wickham, Buckinghamshire one evening to go rent a movie, and I found a wall of new releases. There was a Stallone movie out, and there were like 50 copies of that. And I nearly fainted because there were like ten copies of *Death Collector*."

And distribution by Guild is nothing to sneeze at.

"They were one of the earliest and most successful British video distribution outfits," Nutman says of Guild. "They went on to release *Terminator 2* and a lot of big movies in Britain. It started out as a little 'bucket shop' operation that got lucky, got into the video market just at the right time. Made a lot of money with a lot of crap like *Death Collector* and were able to go on and get the theatrical and video distribution

rights to big, big Hollywood movies."

Additionally, a pirated version of *Death Collector* was distributed by the MNTEX video label.

And although the film never had a proper theatrical release, it was screened as a midnight movie for a couple of weekends on Yale's campus in the early '90s. (And if Ivy Leaguers appreciated the film, who are we to disagree?)

Further, *Death Collector* was reviewed (under the "Tin Star Void" title) in a January, 1989 edition of *Parody*. The reviewer didn't seem to know what to make of this genre-blending low-budget sci-fi Western actioner and wrote that its "only chance is to make it as a cult film."

And a strange mention of *Death Collector* popped up in the 1991 filmmaking documentary, *The Heck With Hollywood*. The doc follows the plights of three low-budget indie directors, and one scene has the Double Helix foreign sales company chairman rattling off the titles that are selling well: *Alien Private Eye*, *Sleepaway Camp II*, *Death Collector*, etc. The chairman then pulls some ad materials for a sensitive drama starring David Morse and says, "But quality films are also acceptable." The implications of that statement are hilarious.

Even stranger was *Death Collector*'s appearance in a segment of the tabloid TV news program *A Current Affair*. Apparently, *Death Collector* was turning a tidy profit for Double Helix, but Gniazdowski and his executive producers weren't getting their due. But instead of demanding an audit of Double Helix's books, the *Death Collector* director and his female lead, Collins, appeared on *A Current Affair* to talk about getting bilked. And by all reports, Collins really turned on the waterworks. The bad publicity did the trick, reportedly prompting Double Helix to quickly cut a check.

The Praise and the Philip

Death Collector presents a unique and well-conceived neo-1950s, neo-Western vision of the post-apocalypse. Wade Holt and his carefully-styled contemporaries wear cowboy boots and hats and drink in a saloon and listen to Western music. But Wade also sports a '50s crew cut and rolled-sleeve white t-shirt, and all the vehicles are custom hot rods and '50s conveyances (*Death Collector*, with its neo-1950s future, was years ahead of 1998's *Six-String Samurai* and 2000's *Superstreak A.D.*). The film's main theme, by Sound X, perfectly fit both the Western and retro elements of the film; the percussive use of muted guitar strings evokes a horse's gallop (the Western), and the guitar's reverb and tremolo sound vaguely surf rock-ish (the retro).

Also, the production went the extra

CULT MOVIES

mile in shooting at very interesting locations: abandoned industrial sites, rundown urban spots, and – my favorite – a dreary used tire yard.

And this low-budget sci-fi action film refreshingly doesn't have the one groaningly obligatory gore scene and the one groaningly obligatory mud scene. But perhaps that was not by the filmmaker's design.

"We wanted [Ruth Collins] to take her top off, but she wanted \$4000, and that was not in the budget," Lang says. "We were the only movie that Ruth Collins didn't pop her top on."

Most online plot summaries of *Death Collector* play up the "backwards insurance" aspect of the story with such loglines as "In the future you pay insurance companies to live." The cover of *RatDon's Death Collector* video jacket announces, "In the not too distant future there is no justice... just insurance." This is not, in your humble writer's opinion, the real crux of the film. The film's vision of insurance companies' role in future society isn't a particularly realistic or clever concept (although the story was cleverly set in Hartford CT, the insurance capital of the world). The real interest lies in Wade Holt's "character spine": after Wade's irresponsibility begets the murder of his very honorable brother, Wade must step up to the plate, become a man, and fill the "Tin Star Void."

With this character of slacker turned hero Wade Holt, *Death Collector* appears to have provided the late Daniel Chapman with the only leading role of his career. The likeable, lankily handsome actor had played some non-speaking "featured extra" roles, as when he played a door-blocking FBI agent in 1988's *Mississippi Burning* and one of the few non-evil paramedics in 1990's *The Ambulance*. Chapman had a small speaking part as an emaciated AIDS patient alongside Tom Hanks in 1993's *Philadelphia* (in reality, Chapman would die of AIDS the next year). But for most of his film career, the likeable actor toiled in supporting roles for porno-turned-legit director Chuck Vincent (*Young Nurses in Love*, *Deranged*, *New York's Finest*).

In fact, much of the *Death Collector* cast – Chapman, Collins, Stewart, Debi Thibault – were regular performers for Vincent and/or Connecticut director Gorman Bechard (*Psychos in Love*, *Galactic Gigolo*, *Cemetery High*). Was there a direct connection between *Death Collector*, Vincent, and Bechard?

"I think Daniel Chapman just came in for an audition, and Tom hired him immediately," remembers Lang. "And I think through him they got Ruth Collins because they were friends. A week before the second shoot, we didn't have the brother part, the sheriff part [cast]. And so I think Ruth got a hold of Frank. And he did it as a favor."

But the film-best performance belongs to Philip Nutman, who plays "Tough," Hawk's gun-chewing henchman. Nutman is vaguely Malkovichian in appearance, and he seems capable of summoning the same amount of thespic sharpness, intensity, and menace as that Oscar-nominated actor. And yet this standout performer isn't even an actor by trade; Nutman is a Bram Stoker Award-nominated novelist, a former British correspondent for *Fangoria* magazine, a screenwriter, and a comic book author.

How did this writer come to land a major role (fifth billing and 52 minutes of screen time) in *Death Collector*, and how did he manage to be so damn good?

In 1987, Nutman was quitting his job in London at the BBC in order to "take the plunge into full-time writing." He came to America for a few weeks – partly as a holiday, partly to drum up some writing work – and stayed in New York City with make-up effects artist Tom Lauten (*The Toxic Avenger*). Lauten had been hired as *Death Collector*'s weapons expert, and Nutman met Giszardowski through him.

"With my hair slicked back, my Don Johnson stubble, my sunglasses, I walked in in the middle of a production meeting between Tom G and Tom Lauten," Nutman recalls. "Tom G took one look at me and went, 'Oh man, I gotta have you in my fucking movie!' And I'm like, 'Get the fuck out of here. I'm a writer, not an actor!'"

Nutman agreed to appear in the film, but he first made a side trip



(top) Philip Nutman plays Hawk's cruel henchman, Tough

(middle) Production photo of Nutman and Frank Stewart during a bar-room shoot

(bottom) Production photo of Nutman and Blackwell at the film's bowling alley location. (Production photos courtesy of Philip Nutman.)

cont'd. on page 59

The Story of Bela Lugosi's Steamer Trunk by Frank J. Dello Stritto



In 2001 collector David Wentink acquired a steamer trunk once owned by film legend Bela Lugosi, and has since worked to document its authenticity and history. David contacted me after reading a fleeting mention of the trunk in Andi Brooks' and my book, *Vampire Over London - Bela Lugosi in Britain*. I was glad to be able to help him track down a bit more information. With David's permission, below is a summary of his considerable labors to date.

The History of the Trunk

Lugosi's trunk was made by the Oshkosh Trunk Company of Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Trunk restoration expert Marvin Miller is fairly certain it was manufactured during the late 1920s or early 1930s, the heyday of steamer trunks (also called "cabin trunks" and "wardrobe trunks"). The trunks were meant to stand upright, with wooden hangers on one side, and drawers on the other. Some of the larger trunks (not Lugosi's, however) sported a fold-down desk, and offered their owners a portable office. A common practice was, at the time of purchase, to have the owner's name painted on the trunk. "BELA LUGOSI" appears on the end of the trunk in large, yellow letters.

When Lugosi acquired the trunk is unknown; but from the late 1920s onward, the actor would have had something very special to put in it: his Dracula costume and cape. He first played Dracula on stage in 1927, in try-outs in Connecticut in September, and then opening on Broadway on October 5. *Dracula* ran 261 performances, closing in May 1928, when Lugosi and a good many of the New

York cast headed to the West Coast for the play's Los Angeles, San Francisco and Oakland premieres. Lugosi saw the trip not as a theatre tour but as a career move from New York to California, and he may have purchased the trunk at this time.

In the late 1920s, the Dracula costume may not yet have been his personal property, but transported as part of the production's wardrobes. As Dracula took on a life beyond specific theatre engagements for Lugosi, the actor would have acquired his own cape and formal evening suit. They would have been neatly folded and hung on one side of the trunk. The large drawers on the other side were big enough to hold Lugosi's bulky scrapbooks, which he usually kept with him.

After the California tour of 1928, Lugosi settled in Hollywood and found stardom with the 1931 film version of *Dracula*. During his years of peak popularity he was often on the road, and the trunk would have always been with him. He played Dracula on stage in West Coast cities again 1929 and 1932. In 1933-1934, he toured the East Coast in an abbreviated version of the play. He made trips to Britain in 1935 to film *Mystery of the Mary Celeste*, and again in 1939 to film *Dark Eyes of London*. He made many stage and personal appearances in San Francisco, and whenever his travels brought him east, he usually stopped in Chicago, hometown of his wife Lillian. The World War II years brought lengthy stage tours in *Dracula* (the East Coast) and *Arsenic & Old Lace* (the Gulf and East Coasts). The post-war years saw his career in decline, and he

made frequent, scattered appearances in stock summer theatre and in midnight spook shows. He played Dracula for the last time in 1951, in a six-month stage tour in Britain.

Lillian and Bela returned to Los Angeles in late 1951, and divorced in 1953 after 20 years of marriage. In 1954, Lugosi did a week of stage work in St. Louis, and four weeks at the Silver Slipper Casino in Las Vegas, but otherwise never left southern California again.

Lugosi married for the fifth and last time in 1955. Hope Lininger Lugosi inherited the steamer trunk when Lugosi died in 1956. Hope moved to San Francisco in the early 1960s where she remained until her move to Hawaii in 1976. In 1964 she donated the trunk to public radio station KQED in San Francisco for a fund raising auction. Hope often gave Lugosi mementos to friends and Lugosi fans that gained her favor. Most likely she met someone who worked for the station and who asked if she could donate something of his.

The successful bidder kept the trunk until November 1999 when he consigned it to Butterfield & Butterfield auction house in Los Angeles. The description of the trunk in the auction catalogue is:

1136A Bela Lugosi Steamer Trunk

A large steamer trunk that horror master Bela Lugosi used while travelling. Originally sold at a 1964 auction that benefited San Francisco public radio station KQED, this piece is painted brown, has various railway and passenger ship stickers affixed to the outside and has the ownership name of Bela Lugosi painted in large yellow block letter along the bottom left-side surface. When opened, the interior space has three shelves on one side and a clothes rack on

POP! MOVIES

the other, and though the condition is poor (outside brass hinges and locks broken, paint is chipped and surface dents are evident), this is still a great vintage trunk reminding us of sophisticated travel from a by-gone era.

26 inches by 42 inches by 22 inches

The trunk sold for more than ten times its estimate to Randy Burkett's Hollywood Museum, which was being formed in Branson, Missouri. Branson, tourist mecca of the Ozark mountains, has many such attractions, and the new museum spent lavishly to build a collection that included at least three vintage automobiles used in various movies. In late 1999, the economy was flying high; but within a few months, the stock market crashed, and tourism and financing were down. The fledgling museum, located in a strip mall, declared bankruptcy. David Wentink, a bidder at the 1999 auction, was contacted by the liquidators, and bought the trunk directly from them.

The Angels Are in the Details

The trunk's new owner set out to document its history. David contacted me when he noticed a brief mention of the trunk in *Vampire Over London*. In a description of the day-to-day routine of the traveling *Dracula* stage company, he read:

"After Saturday night's performance, the actors would deposit their costumes into the 'skips'—large wicker hampers—one for the men and one for the women. Janet Reid had the costumes cleaned and pressed, and hanging in the assigned dressing rooms of the next theatre in time for Monday night's performance. She did not handle Bela's cape and wardrobe. He kept his effects in a large steamer trunk, which was shipped directly from the store to theatre. He took particular care in looking after the cape. A 'Bela Lugosi Dracula Cape' was not yet the prized collectible it is

today, but he was mindful that it might go astray. It traveled between engagements in his stage coffin. After every performance, he carefully folded it into the trunk, which he kept locked. During the company's ill-starred week in Lewisham, he left the key in his hotel room. The desk clerk retrieved it, and dispatched it to the theatre in a taxi, which arrived

husband, Ralph Wilson, the tour's second Van Helsing, remembers seeing the trunk often in Bela's dressing room, but "that type of wardrobe trunk was very popular both before and after the second world war, but nobody has them now." Joan Harding, the tour's second Wells the Mad, has a clear memory:

"I would say it was Bela's without a doubt, though I remember it more when it was open standing on its end with the drawers and wardrobe showing. I can't remember much else about it apart from seeing, for the first time, a photograph of their son standing on top of it."

Probably, Bela kept the photo of his son in one of the trunk drawers, and always had it handy to set up in his dressing room. John Mather, the *Dracula* tour's producer, has no memory of the trunk, but clearly recalls the scrapbooks that Bela carried with him even to England. As Andi and I relate in our book:

"John arrived at the Lugosi's flat early one evening for a brief chat about the production. As Lillian hurried to dress for dinner, Bela sat John on the sofa, left and returned with a large scrapbook of ancient newspaper clippings, 40 or 50 years old. John could not read a word of them except "Lugosi" and play titles like *Romeo & Juliet*. From what John could divine, they were theatre notices from Hungary, printed long before he was born. They were rave reviews. Bela always impressed John as humble and quiet; but he could see the actor's pride as Bela patiently guided him through the scrapbook, describing each page, conjuring a distant memory for each."

The Lugosis returned to Los Angeles in late 1951, about the same time as his young writer/producer friend Alex Gordon moved to the West Coast. Alex's brother Dick had arranged Bela's stage and film appearance in



just in time for Bela's prologue."

At David's behest I contacted the eight surviving members of the company that Andi and I had located. Several remembered the trunk. Richard Eastham, the play's director who worked closely with Lugosi through April 1951, recalls:

"Although I never saw it, I remember the mention of it. He made a point of saying he had his own 'full dress'—'tails' in our jargon—and he could just 'take it out of his trunk without pressing.' All my family had these 'cabin trunks,' which meant we could have extensive wardrobe in one's cabin. My family's trunks were covered with ship's line labels."

Joyce Wilson, who traveled with her

England (after the *Dracula* tour ended, Lugosi appeared in *Mother Riley Meets The Vampire*), and in California Alex now worked as Bela's sometime agent. After viewing photos of the trunk, Alex clearly remembered it in Bela's apartment on Carlton Way, and seeing the cape and scrapbooks in it. Alex planned to write David a longer reminiscence, but passed away in June 2003.

In 1952 Alex introduced Bela to the infamously inept film director, Edward D. Wood, with whom Lugosi would make three of his last films, *Glen or Glenda*, *Bride of the Monster* (co-written by Alex), and *Plan 9 From Outer Space*. Wood's "company of players" included actor Paul Marco, who would appear as "Kelton the Cop" in *Plan 9 From Outer Space* (though Bela never heard that title – he appeared in test footage for an unnamed film which, after Bela's death, Wood incorporated into his opus). The most elaborate memory of the trunk unearthed to date is Marco's tale of Bela's and Hope's wedding night. Marco's story appears in both Robert Cremer's *Lugosi – The Man Behind The Cape* and Arthur Lennig's *The Immortal Count*. David sent Marco photos of the trunk, and the actor repeated his reminiscence to David over the telephone. Hope and Bela married in Los Angeles on August 24, 1955. Bela, Jr.

was the best man, and in attendance were a few friends of Hope and some of Bela's co-workers. Lennig quotes Marco:

"After it was over, all of the photographers left, and eventually the only ones there were Bela, Hope, Eddie, Jo (Ed Wood's girlfriend) and me. So, here we were, driving Bela and Hope to their wedding apartment. We were coming down Western Avenue when Bela spotted this big Italian deli and cried out, 'We gotta stop here!' Eddie stayed in the car with Jo and Hope while Bela and I went into the store. There were half a dozen people in there, everyone started congratulating Bela on his marriage and he was felling good. We walked out carrying jugs of wine, long loaves of French bread, long salamis, jugs of olives, provolone cheese – my arms were full. They were giving us this, giving us that – I don't think we paid for much of anything, everybody was giving us things to congratulate Bela on getting married.

"We arrived at Bela's apartment and walked in – pitch black! Either they hadn't had the electricity turned on yet or they didn't have enough bulbs, but there was very little light in this huge, old-fashioned Spanish living room. There was practically nothing in the room except a huge trunk right in the

middle of the floor – it looked like a coffin, it was that big! We moved some boxes and chairs around the trunk while Hope got some kind of a tablecloth to spread over the top. Then we brought out all the wine and bread and cold cuts, and we all sat around this trunk like pie-makers, laughing and telling stories. That was Bela's wedding dinner."

Countless fans have personal items that once belonged to movie stars, and many of Bela Lugosi's former possessions now reside in various collections. One of them is even the subject of a recent "mockumentary" (Gary Don Rhodes' hilarious "Chair," included on his otherwise serious DVD documentary of Lugosi's life and career). Few of these almost holy relics compare to the steamer trunk, which Lugosi kept close by him for decades, and which held some of his most prized possessions. He owned the trunk for perhaps as long as he "owned" *Dracula*. As he opened it each evening, he would see his whole life captured in its contents: *Dracula* cape and costume on one side, scrapbooks of cherished memories on the other, and a photo of his son in one of the large drawers. He would place the framed photo atop the trunk, don his cape and submerge himself in his character as he prepared yet again to mesmerize his audience. ■

CONFESSIONS OF A MONSTER BOOMER

a regular column by Frank J. Dello Stritto

One of the chilling facts of our own mortality is the very small number of books that can be read in a lifetime. At the rate of a book a week (a pace that I can never long maintain), I would get through less than 4,000 books in my allotted years. At a book a month (more or less my usual pace), I'll finish less than 1,000. That's only a small fraction of the new titles published in a single year, and a minuscule dent in all the books available.

As often as not, the books that I read are histories or commentaries on old horror movies. One of the reasons that I will read fewer books than I might is that most of these surveys of horror are something less than page turners. I have been reading such books now for almost 40 years, and there are five which for me were turning points, which changed the way that I looked at my favorite movies.

The first hardcover book that I ever bought was William K. Everson's *The Bad*

Guys – A Pictorial History of Movie Villains, published in 1964. *Soupy Sales*, host of a kid's show on TV and most famous for getting pies in the face, stopped the on-air mayhem one afternoon, and lovingly leafed through the book as he talked about the movies described in it. My hometown in suburban New Jersey did not have a bookstore, and I had yet to enter a real bookstore. That opportunity came a short time later on a class trip to New York City. The school bus made a stop: I forget where or why, but there was a bookstore and it stocked *The Bad Guys* at \$4.95. I spent that afternoon reading it on a park bench in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty. The statue is on a small island, and we school kids had more freedom to roam there than we might have been allowed on Manhattan. No teacher hassled me as I wondered away to read Everson's chapters on monsters and mad doctors.

Those chapters today seem a rather slight effort. *The Bad Guys* is a truly a pictorial his-



tory: 80% of its 200 or so pages are movie stills. The total amount of text devoted to 1930s and 1940s horrors is only slightly longer than this essay. Everson's book contained few facts that had not been already published many times in *Famous Monsters* and the other monster magazines. Those magazines aimed primarily at a pre-teen readership, a demographic that I was already outgrowing (though I continued to be a loyal reader until one-by-one they bit

CULT MOVIES

CONFESSIONS

cont'd.

the dust). Everson wrote for people like himself, in whom fandom and scholarship lived in happy harmony, I saw in *The Bad Guys* that one could grow up and not leave his favorite movies behind.

A few years later came Carlos Clarens' *An Illustrated History of the Horror Film*. My love of old monster movies was no secret, and one of my high school teachers showed me a review in *Newsweek*. Still no bookstore in North Arlington, New Jersey, so I wrote to G. P. Putnam & Sons asking about it. A copy came with an invoice a week later. This was the first bill that I had ever received; the first time any business had extended me credit, and the first that I had ever received something in the mail that I had not ordered. I sent off a money order for \$6.93 (no one in my family had a checking account until the 1970s). I thought Clarens' book a great one. The so-called illustrated history is, by the standards of 1960s film books, not heavily burdened with photos: 48 glossy pages of stills and 171 pages of uninterrupted text. Clarens' traces horror and fantasy over the entire history of the cinema through 1965. Modern devotees of the genres will have read by now many similar versions of this history. But Clarens' prospective remains as fresh as ever, and anticipates by a quarter century the prevailing tone of current genre writings (from his introduction):

"There seems to be inside us a constant, ever-present yearning for the fantastic, for the darkly mysterious... Everything horrible has been swallowed up by the unconscious—that swamp of self-dread from which there emerge many ambiguous manifestations of itself. And these are the black arts of the day... The classic American horror films of the thirties began to appear on television almost a decade ago. Things that had made us shiver 30 years ago had lost their power to horrify, yet they now emerged as myths, more powerful than ever before..."

Clarens may have been the first—at least in English and in hardcover—to write about movie horror in such terms, but he was not alone. A modest paperback already in the stores when Clarens' history appeared was *Classics of the Film*, a collection of essays by members of the Wisconsin Film Society. A reviewer praised it as "deliberately controversial"—for many reasons, perhaps one of them that Bela Lugosi and *White Zombie* rated as much coverage as the recognized masterpieces of world cinema. The writer of those essays, as well as equally fine ones in the book on silent film, was Arthur Lennig.

In 1974 came Lennig's full-length biography, *The Count—The Life & Films of Bela*

Dracula. Lugosi. Most Lugosi scholarship was as yet unborn. The massive amount of research into Lugosi's life—finding and interviewing old co-workers, unearthing forgotten facts and documents, tracking all his travels and public appearances—lie in the future. Lennig, like one of Lugosi's mad doctors, was utterly on his own. His book was a lifetime labor of love, which brought him from Hungary to Hollywood on the trail of a man who took pains to keep his life private and his past obscure. A reader today of this first edition of Lennig's Lugosi biography may find it rather light on hard data, but in 1974 it was far more comprehensive than any tale not only of Lugosi, but of any horror star. In 2003 Lennig published his revised version as *The Immortal Count*, incorporating the Lugosi fact-finding that his first version did much to inspire. *The Immortal Count* is the thorough, indispensable reference, but the shorter, less formal *The Count* captures Lennig's love of his subject equally well.

About the time that *The Count* appeared, the number of new books on movie horror really started to grow. These included biographies, genre histories, critical overviews, and by the 1980s, analyses of what the monster myths represented. Horror fiction and movies offer such a rich body of images and themes that they can be made to fit almost any interpretation. And they were, in such titles as *Attack of the Leading Ladies!*, *The Beast Within*, *Dark Romance*, *The Dread of Difference*, *Horror & the Holy*, *Monsters in the Closet*, *The Monstrous-Feminine*, *The Movies On Your Mind*, *The Naked & The Undead*, *The Philosophy of Horror*, *Powers of Horror*, *Rational Fears*, and *The Thrill of Fear*.

That list includes some of the books that I most admire, and some that I sadly do not. As a rule, the ones that are most difficult to get into are not worth the effort. An exception is one of the first interpretative analyses that I read and still one of the best, James Twitchell's *Dreadful Pleasures: An Anatomy of Modern Horror*. Twitchell grabs his readers in a short preface:

"Over the past two centuries we see that certain images and sequences have plagued popular culture. Surely it must be important that these motifs won't go away... Whatever first directed our attention toward the macabre, ...no amount of repetition, exploitation or censorship can dislodge it... Horror sequences are really formulaic rituals coded with precise social information needed by the adolescent audience. Like fairy tales that prepare the child for the anxieties of separation, modern horror myths prepare the teenager for the anxieties of reproduction."

That auspicious beginning is followed by a meandering 97-page chapter, that veers

from art to literature to history to prehistory. At last on page 105, Twitchell gets back to his thesis, and thereafter the book is a wild ride for 200 pages, as each of the classic monsters is portrayed in terms of "the anxieties of reproduction". Dracula as unholy intercourse, Frankenstein unholy procreation, Jekyll & Hyde unholy repression, The Wolf Man unholy pubescence:

"Dr. Jekyll must depend on his libidinous double Mr. Hyde to cross forbidden boundaries. So what is the boundary that Larry Talbot can't cross but the Wolf Man can?... He has probably had a better life as a monster than he would have had as a man. But he has to die for it."

Always lurking in the background is incest, which Twitchell sees at the core on the perennial horror tales.

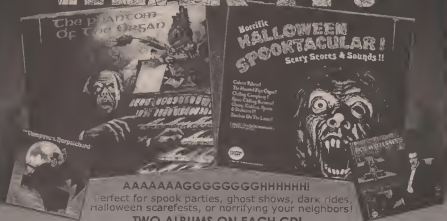
Historical research on a level of Lennig's and interpretative analysis on a par with Twitchell's joined in David Skal's masterpiece, *Hollywood Gothic - The Tangled Web of Dracula from Novel to Stage to Screen*. The narrative's framework is historical, taking Count Dracula from Bram Stoker's novel to F. W. Murnau's classic *Nosferatu* (and Florence Stoker's legal battle against it) to Hamilton Deane's play to the Hollywood gothic promised in the title. Skal's research is stunning, but the reader learns on page one that the book is not a typical Hollywood history:

"Without knowing anything of the myth's origins, most of us can recite without prompting the salient characteristics of the vampire... We have received this information by a curious cultural transfusion... on some psychological level it must reflect some kind of universal knowledge... This is not the first book written on the subject of *Dracula*, and it will not be the last. But most treatments to date have largely ignored the fascinating history, now nearly a century old, of the men and women whose lives have become entangled in the myth's peculiar power. *Dracula* has exerted an irresistible, and at times, Faustian attraction upon numerous individuals who used the ever-expanding dream-machinery of publishing, theatre, and film to exploit the story's power."

Many fine books on horror films have been written—some by the same authors named above—and but for chance I might have named a different pantheon of those which most influenced me. The five titles described above made the movies for me more meaningful, and more fun. In one form or another, the five are still obtainable. Clarens' history has been republished under various titles; Lennig's *The Count* has been expanded into *The Immortal Count*. An internet search should track down copies of all of them. ■

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James Warren Live!



(Above) *Famous Monsters* creators James Warren and Forrest J Ackerman reunite (Right Top) Warren and *Cult Movies* editor Michael Copner (Right Bottom) Warren, Copner, and Ackerman with horror mask maker Verne Langdon

On November 22, 2003, Verne Langdon provided the most surprising birthday surprise anyone could have given to Forrest J Ackerman on the occasion of FJA's 87th birthday, by producing none other than James Warren, the originator and 1958-1984 publisher of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine.

In addition to *FM*, the team of Warren & Ackerman created many other magazines which inspired the phenomenal American monster craze of our young generation, including *Vampirella* and *Monster World*.

CULT MOVIES

James Warren and Forry Ackerman had not seen each other in several decades, and the birthday-time reunion was an emotion filled event, a historical moment which still reverberates with potential. During his extended stay in Southern California, Mr. Warren was involved in numerous ongoing monster-related business meetings.

After Forry's birthday party, Mr. Warren granted us an exclusive interview regarding the birth of *Famous Monsters*, how the Warren publishing empire helped shape our American popular culture, and a look to the future.

Interview by Michael Copner

Cult Movies: We want to talk to you about the distribution of your magazines, which was a very important factor to us in the 1960s. *Famous Monsters* was hard to find on the newsstand, which made it all that much more valuable when we did find it.

James Warren: The major reason behind that was that we'd started a new genre, and newsstand managers didn't know what to do with us or where to place us on the news racks. Some put us with movie magazines, while some put us with *Mad Magazine*. There was no consistency.

CM: Where would you prefer to have been placed?

JW: I would have preferred to own all my own newsstands, in order to get the job done

right. But barring that, I told news dealers to place *FM* somewhere between the comic books and *Mad Magazine*. I said, "That doesn't mean our customers are exactly the same kind of customers when you place us in the drugstores or on the newsstands." I just felt that if we were in that general area of interest, then our covers should be of sufficient interest to take over and create the sales. But not if we got lost with the movie magazines. Or even worse, with the photography magazines. Some dealers thought of us as a photography journal with the black & white photos, so they'd place us in that section, where we'd also lose sales.

They had to be told. They didn't have the knowledge, the understanding or inclination to consider that this was something special, just as *Mad* and *Playboy* had been when they first premiered. So we were breaking new ground, and I was still an outsider looking in. I learned that in each city and territory, magazine distribution is a monopoly. Many of the people in this business came from the seamy side of society. They weren't exactly the underworld, but they were close.

CM: I recall reading that you'd done some advance publicity before Issue #1 was printed, and then there was some delay. But I can't remember what the delay was.

JW: There was no delay on my part. Every magazine has an on-sale date, though few publishers meet that date 100% of the time. *FM* was printed on time, and then the Northeast section of the U.S. experienced the worst storm in 50 years. The trucks were snowed in and couldn't take the magazines from the printers by road or to the trains for national distribution. It took three weeks afterwards before the roads were sufficiently cleared.

CM: And in that three weeks the distributors had a chance to forget your advance

CM: Were you providing any point-of-purchase extras, like posters or cardboard display boxes to place them in?

JW: No. My net worth at the time consisted of 12 pizza discount coupons, three of which had already expired. There was no money for extras beyond printing.

CM: Do you recall the print run of that first issue?

JW: Sure. Don't you recall your birthday? The first print run was 200,000. And once it got to the public, there were many areas where it sold out within five days.

CM: And that's when history was made.

JW: That's when the wholesalers weren't calling me "kid" anymore. Some of them still didn't understand the concept, or what had happened in five days, but we knew we had a hit on our hands. Reports were flying from all over the country that, "We've got this dumb thing with a kind of Frankenstein whist on the cover, I don't know what it is, but it's all sold out! We want a re-order!" Some of them wanted to double the previous order. When you're getting that kind of response from Chicago, New York, Los Angeles and five or six other key areas, you know it's a hit. So we went back to press and printed another 200,000. And with the exception of perhaps 10,000 copies we sold out the entire print run on those books.

CM: In those days were you having to take the distributors' word for how many copies were sold?

JW: We had to take their word, and their word was absurd because they lie, cheat, and steal. In major cities the distributors had the right to give you an affidavit, signed in front of a notary public, stating that unsold

magazines again. My attorneys felt a few dealers might even put out a hit on me. So it was a very tough time in the late 1950s. But we did succeed by showing them that "the kid" had something. Even if the more experienced pros didn't know why our magazines were popular, the young generation knew exactly what we were all about. The second battle I had to fight in addition to distribution, came as a surprise because none of us saw it coming. And that was the religious battle. The Catholic schools came down on me; the diocese of Philadelphia and Boston, who accused me of blasphemy for having a magazine about movies like Frankenstein, showing life created by science rather than by deity. Of course, now with cloning and organ banks, we know this is at least possible and can serve as a force of good for mankind. But then it was pure speculation and science-fiction, and it was construed as a gift from the devil. At first I thought it was a real reach, and nothing to be concerned with. But then I saw they were serious, especially when they started picketing our wholesalers and retailers. Particularly if our dealer was Catholic; he'd cease selling us right away.

CM: And the fact that these movies were based on folklore or classics of literature meant nothing?

JW: You'd think it should have meant something to schoolteachers, who should have known better. But our magazines were confiscated in schools. I went to PTA meetings to discuss the subject, and when I referred to these classic films as an art form, I was laughed out of the room. The adults had no appreciation of the genius that went into the music, lighting, make-up, and the talent of actors like Karloff and Lugosi which all made these films a valuable art. History has shown me to have been 50 years ahead of the times, since the Federal Government put the movie monsters on a postage stamp series a few years ago. Ten-year olds take these films for granted now. But when we started *FM* we were an enigma, greatly misunderstood, just like the monsters themselves! When I first met Verne Langdon he was being persecuted for creating the Universal monster masks at Don Post Studios. Complaints arose that our young readers were wearing them at Halloween.

CM: Who was persecuting?

JW: The Philadelphia school system held a PTA meeting to address the problem, just to give one example. That's the city where our offices were, and I attended the meeting. They said, "Better our children should be wearing Donald Duck or something from *The Wizard of Oz* than these awful Frankenstein faces." Again, they thought this was of the devil. How are you going to respond to a thing like that? Verne Langdon

"My net worth consisted of 12 pizza discount coupons, three of which had already expired. There was no money for extras beyond printing."

promotion

JW: "Forget" is not the word. I was a small independent. *FM* was my only magazine, and my promotion was forgotten the minute I spoke it. Three weeks after that storm, a lot of the distributors had completely forgotten me. I had to get back on the phone with many of them, and they'd say, "Kid, don't bother me! I've got important things to do!" I was 28 years old and got called "kid" a lot. I had to grin and bear it and work it out. They didn't understand what our magazine was about and they really didn't care.

copies were destroyed. But they never destroyed them. First of all, if they sold 70% of what you shipped them, they represented that they only sold 50%. And then they took the rest and sold them illegally. There was a time when I was considering a federal lawsuit against all the distributors for fraud, and my attorneys advised that I could possibly win millions in damages, but I'd be out of business because no American distributor would touch my products again. On the other hand if a court decided against me, I'd lose the case and still no distributors would ever handle my

was a member of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Clown College Faculty. He knows make-up, entertainment, as well as kids and how their minds work. As we all know now, the kids identified with the monsters. The writers shifted our sympathies by making the torch-bearing villagers the wrongdoers and violators. The Frankenstein monster became a rebel, loveless yet loveable at the same time, because he never harmed anyone until he himself was harmed. The same went for the Creature, the Wolf Man, and most of the monsters. This promoted acceptance in the mind of the viewers, and food for thought along with the chills and thrills. It's a main reason why these films are revived today, still considered contemporary in fact, while many films of the 1930s are forgotten. But critics have always said, "No, don't tamper with the formula and humanize the rebel or the monster. There's the white hats and the black hats, and bad guys behind bars." But since the authority figures couldn't display that out-look personally to Boris Karloff, they took it out on me. I was the one producing this magazine and kind of a focus of their anger.

CM: My teachers in the third grade told my parents to burn my copies of *FM*.

JW: That was going on all over the country. Students would call me or write me locally in Philadelphia and tell me these stories, and I'd send them another copy. But I'd tell them, "Don't take it to school." And I'd also ask them, "What's the name of your teacher?" And I'd write a personal letter to the teacher explaining my viewpoint as we've been talking about it now.

CM: You got that involved?

JW: I had to. Nobody knows what I did to try and attain acceptance for our publications. Forry Ackerman never knew; he was living on his own planet and doing his own thing. And he was very fortunate, growing up with grandparents who took him to horror films every week back in the silent era, and they all loved them. It was very different for Forry, since he didn't grow up in the world of, "This is bad!" And the magic he worked in the magazine helped create geniuses like Spielberg, who was a young member of our early monster fan club. And I keep thinking back to that amazing turn-around of the movie monster postage stamps. That might not have happened without *FM*. I wonder if *Cult Movies* has some readers who think you should be writing more about *Gone With the Wind*, and less about these horror films. When I was younger, we had cult movies, but we didn't call them that. You want to know who my cult heroes were?

CM: Sure!

CULT MOVIES

JW: The Dead End Kids.

CM: So you got a new cult film every month.

JW: That was later, as the East Side Kids, when they cranked out dozens of films at Monogram. But when I saw Gabe Dell, Leo Gorcey, Huntz Hall, and Bobby Jordan in that 1937 film with Bogart, they became my anti-establishment cult heroes. Any time *Dead End* would be re-issued at the theaters, I'd go see it.

CM: (Verne Langdon interjects: "You're a rebel in a variety of ways, like when you ran that anti-smoking public service announcement in all your magazines.")

JW: I did that for several reasons, not just to

"The magic Forry worked in the magazine helped create geniuses like Spielberg, who was a young member of our early monster fan club."

be a rebel. An ad agent came to me from one of the big cigarette manufacturers. He knew that we reached a great deal of the youth market, and that to perpetuate cigarette sales on into the next generation and put his own kids through college, he should zero in on our readers. I was taken to lunch on Park Avenue in New York, in the mid-1960s, and I'm talking to this agent. He's ready to buy all our back covers in color, and he wants to know our open ad rate. I was going to tell him some absurd low figure like \$200 per issue, just to close the deal. But I still didn't know what he would be selling. Now by the mid-60s, everyone knew cigarettes were addictive, even though they still lie and claim they didn't know. And they knew it caused cancer. They'd known it since the '40s. At any rate, Warren Publications had a lot of titles going, since we'd introduced *Vampirella* magazine by then. And this guy said, "Give us all your back covers for all your magazines and we'll give you \$25,000 for the year." Now can you imagine how much that would have meant to us then? But I said, "I don't care much for smoking. I don't think it's good for kids or adults." So he said, "Then we'll make it \$30,000." Again I declined.

He said, "You're a tough customer, aren't you?" Then in his arrogance, he said, "Okay, name your price." I couldn't believe what I was hearing. So I said, "\$100,000 for the year." To which he replied, "I'll get back to you." I couldn't believe what was taking place. On the one hand, I didn't want his ads. Yet I would have killed for a \$100,000 guarantee. Strangely enough, he was true to his word. He got back to me that same day. By

the time I got back to my office there was a message there to call him, which I did. Suddenly, with this one guy, I was "kud" again. He said, "Kid, a hundred thousand is out of the question. But we'll give you \$50,000 for the year." An offer which I declined. That's when I started to think about the arrogance of the individual and the industry, the misuse of power, and decided to have that public service ad made.

CM: That was an effective comic strip. The young guy with his arm around the chick in the bikini, and his line about, "I NEVER got wunded now!" Because he's thrown away his cigarettes.

JW: You have a good memory. I thought that if I could rob those arrogant liars of just one cus-

tomer per month, it would be worth the effort.

CM: You had your work cut out for you, since they'd been placing print ads in many magazines and papers telling how doctors knew cigarettes were good for you.

JW: Doctors? How about Ronald Reagan? He used to do ads for Camels.

Frank Frazetta drew [the anti-smoking] ad, and to his everlasting credit, never took a dime for it. And he was a three-pack-a-day man until he was 50. And Archie Goodwin, who wrote the ad, also refused to take money for it. That's the kind of people I had working for me.

CM: I don't know their situations. Did they receive cancer from smoking?

JW: Years later I found out that each of them had people in their families who'd developed cancer. Whether it was lung cancer from smoking or not, I don't know. But I was proud to run the ad, even though we got flak for it.

CM: You got flak for the ad? From who?

JW: Who would you suspect?

CM: The guy who said, "Kid, we'll give you \$0 grand for the back covers."

JW: That's a good guess, but it wasn't them. It was a family whose father worked in a tobacco related industry, making the cigarette paper. He thought I was taking food off his table. The demographic for all our magazines was teen age, so I felt the no-smoking ad was worthwhile. My first title had been called *After Hours*, which was a replica of *Playboy*. We certainly wouldn't have run it there.

CM: You met Hugh Hefner several times, didn't you?

JW: Yes. I don't know if you'll believe this, but his first publication was a "zine all about horror and monsters. Most of the world doesn't know that. It's like we're star-crossed, each publishing the other fellow's concepts. Hugh loves horror movies. I almost bought the franchise to open a Playboy Club in Philadelphia. At the time it wouldn't have worked out because in that city, in the early 1960s, you couldn't serve liquor on Sundays or after midnight on Saturday. We'd have lost a great deal of business. The laws are changed now. I real-

ly night and never required an assistant. He needed to be the boss, just like Orson Welles, or Thomas Edison, the Wright Brothers, or any other "top dogs."

CM: There's another character I'd like to ask you about. Ray Fory was all over the newspapers when he and Ackerman were in court. Do you have any thoughts on him?

JW: I don't think about him very often. He really means nothing.

CM: Here's another important question. The things that are in these movies and comics, such as ghosts, UFOs, Bigfoot, and so on. Does Jim Warren believe in any of this?

JW: No.

Jimmy Carter. He claims to have seen a UFO. I talked with him about this exact same thing, and he told me there was evidence that we've been observed since we began our first atomic bomb testing. This is not some crackpot, obviously. I believe he mentions something about it in his autobiography.

CM: As a final sentiment, how did you enjoy today's reunion with Forrest J Ackerman?

JW: Fory is still one of the beautiful people. I was fortunate to be working with him right from the start, since he is one of the most perfect wordsmiths of this generation, perhaps of this century. Fory and I both have something in common in that we never entirely grew up. There is a bit of the child in both of us. I'd seen the grown up world and didn't like what it represented. It was a lot of takers, like those magazine distributors and cigarette makers we were talking about a minute ago. So I've been lucky to work in an area that appeals to the sense of imagination in all of us.

CM: You're here on business for several weeks. Is there any chance that you're getting back into the monster publishing game after this long hiatus?

JW: All things are possible. ■

"Hugh Hefner's first publication was a 'zine all about horror and monsters. Hugh loves horror movies."

ly wanted to be a part of the emerging new world I saw springing up around me.

CM: It would have been quite a team to have you and Hef working together.

JW: Hugh Hefner is a genius in his own

CM: Not to any degree?

JW: I like empirical proof. So I should say that a third of my mind is open to the reality of these things. The older I get the more open I am to the endless possibilities in the universe. If you want another opinion, check out

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Death Collector cont'd. from page 49

(below left) Ruth Collins as Annie
(below right) Frank Stewart as Jack



to Los Angeles with *Fongoria* editor Anthony Timpone (their trip, by the way, is detailed in Timpone's editorial in *Fongoria* #70). On the eve of Nutman's East Coast return, he attended an all-night party. And when he arrived back east, Nutman was picked up at the airport and driven straight to the shooting location where he was expected, sleep-deprived, to jump into the first film performance of his life.

Nutman's part was originally meant as "one day, one scene, one cameo." But the writer turned fledgling actor was so impres-

Gniazdowski produced 1990's *A Girl's Guide to Sex for Six Shooter*, and Lang worked on the film also. The \$300,000 *Girl's Guide* reached an audience on Rhonda Shear's *USA Up All Night*. Gniazdowski and Lang regrouped in the mid-90s in Florida to make *Coribbean Kill* with *American Werewolf* in London star David Naughton. After *Coribbean Kill* (which, incidentally, sold only to Brazil) their production company came to be called Circa Entertainment, and Gniazdowski and Lang are gearing up to shoot a pair of hor-

"It was the last time [at Causes] with all those crappy movies being sold, when people were actually buying that stuff," Lang explains. "The '80s were an incredible time for that, with the ravenous need for video product. But it got so glutted that by 1990 it just completely collapsed. The floor was like a trap door. Because all these foreign sales companies vanished in the early '90s, like Double Helix."

"It was the exact tail end [of the heyday of video]," Gniazdowski echoes. "It died that year, that MIFED, that Cannes."

But even though low-budget genre films were especially viable in the 1980s because of home video, it was not the great period of genre film, according to Lang, who grew up on the drive-in and grindhouse fare of the '70s.

"In the '70s...we had Fellini movies, Corman movies, martial-arts movies. There was an excitement in the air...you wanted to make movies. To me, the money was secondary. Now I think that's all." Lang sadly admits that we may have seen the decline and fall of great B-cinema. "The business I wanted to be in ceased to exist."

But no matter what happens in the future for Lang and the gang, they can be proud of the film they made during parts of 1987 and 1988. To quote Philip Nutman's perfect estimation of *Death Collector*: "For what it is, and for what it cost...I think it is a delightfully quirky little strange movie that has its own particular *je ne sais quoi*, its own certain little quality that obviously has continued to find favor with people, albeit a small audience." ■

"In the '70s, we had Fellini movies, Corman movies, martial-arts movies. There was an excitement in the air...you wanted to make movies. To me, the money was secondary."

save that, as he puts it: "They kept sticking me in more and more scenes." Gniazdowski affirms, "He became the star of the trailer." Nutman was flown from England the next year for the second shoot (and this novice even pulled some second-unit directorial duties before the shoot wrapped).

But the *Death Collector* work was, as Nutman describes it, "a career aberration." He went on to a successful writing career, penning the 1993 novel *Het Work* and winning the praise of such colleagues as Clive Barker. Still, it's something of a cinematic crime that Philip Nutman has not had subsequent film roles.

The Phuture

Gniazdowski and Lang are still at it. After directing *Death Collector* for his own Six Shooter Films production company,

ror films back to back. Also planned is a re-cutting of *Death Collector* and a repackaging of the film as "Lone Justice" for a future DVD release (such a retitling will hopefully avoid any further confusion with the 1975 mob film also named *Death Collector*).

Lang, however, laments that there was never a *Death Collector* sequel.

"I came up with a sequel idea, 'Death Collector II,'" the editor tells, "Where Tough Nutman was now in a wheelchair and he's the man bad guy. And Wade Holt's son comes to town...It basically would have been a remake." But Lang says the follow-up movie was impossible, as all the blighted (but photogenically so) locations used in *Death Collector* had disappeared by 1995.

Both Lang and Gniazdowski realize that the 1989 video release of *Death Collector* came at the end of an era.

Special thanks to Doug Block (www.D-word.com) for providing a copy of *The Heck with Hollywood* to the writer.

New Light on *Dark Eyes of London* Part 2

by Frank J. Delio Strato & Andi Brooks



[Editor's Note: As our regular readers know, *Cult Movies Press'* *Vampire Over London* – Bela Lugosi in Britain deals with Lugosi's 1951 British stage tour as *Dracula*, as well as his three British film productions: *Mystery of the Mary Celeste* (1935), *Dark Eyes of London* (1939, aka *The Human Monsters*), and *Mother Riley Meets The Vampire* (1952). Below is an extract from *Vampire Over London*, dealing with *Dark Eyes of London*. Part 1 of this extract dealt with the British "ban" of horror films, which began in 1937, and the surprise resurgence of horror, even in England, with the return of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* on a double bill in 1938. After the box office success of *Son of Frankenstein* in early 1939, Bela Lugosi, who had been out of work for many months, was again in high demand in Hollywood. Part 1 ended with Lugosi's arrival in England to film *Dark Eyes of London* and his only meeting with Hamilton Deane, who had written the first stage adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and who in 1939 was playing Count Dracula on the London stage.]

In early March 1939 – three weeks before arriving in England – Bela Lugosi completed filming *The Gorilla*, a "scary comedy" starring the Ritz Brothers and his fellow horror star Lionel Atwill. Bela's next Hollywood assignment would be *The Phantom Creeps*, his first picture under his new contract at Universal. *The Phantom Creeps* is a 12-part serial, aimed at Saturday matinee audiences. Bela has some acting in the first and last chapters, but otherwise does nothing but look evil and cowl in episode

after episode: his genius and plans for world domination! The return of horror provided him a livelihood, but choice roles worthy of his talents were going to be scarce.

Independent British producer John Angyle offered Bela something a bit more solid with the lead role in an adaptation of Edgar Wallace's mystery, *Dark Eyes of London*, scheduled to begin filming in late April. The title refers to a band of blind men who use their mastery of the dark to run a robbery and kidnapping ring. They are under the control of a criminal mastermind, to be played by Lugosi. The movie's four-week shooting schedule barely fit between his prior commitments, but a good part was not to be missed and British producers willingly paid top rates for known American stars.

Bela left Lillian and 14-month old Bela, Jr. in Los Angeles, headed for New York and sailed on the Queen Mary on March 24. The trip was his first separation of any duration from Lillian since they had married six years before and would be their longest for some years to come. She probably stayed behind rather than travel with an infant. Perhaps Bela preferred to keep his family well away from the coming conflicts in Europe. He turned not at all in England. He stayed only two of the planned four weeks, and left as soon as all his scenes were shot. As during his earlier visit in 1935, speculations of further film work in England followed him home: movie adaptations of other Edgar Wallace thrillers and Alexander Dumas' *The Vampire*. They never went beyond talk, and all talk ended as the outbreak of war neared.

East Europeans like Bela had no unique

insights into the future, but his fellow countrymen who visited or lived in London in 1939 felt a special sense of déjà vu. The dread and anticipation matched the atmosphere in Budapest or Vienna in 1914. A declining empire, clinging to its past grandeur and quaint customs, was about to be cruelly dragged into the modern world. And the peoples of the small countries between the great powers would again be ground to dust. Less than two weeks before the Queen Mary departed New York with Bela onboard, the Nazis burst any illusion of peace by gobbling up what was left of Czechoslovakia. Like Hungary a generation before, Britain would survive not because of its treasured customs, but through the raw resolve and tenacity of its people. Thanks to the bodies of water to the east and the great ally to the west, Britain's ordeal would have a far happier outcome.

Bela reached London the morning of his meeting with Hamilton Deane. Filming at Welwyn studios began the next day. The finished script for *Dark Eyes of London* massively simplified Wallace's convoluted plot with its numerous twists and surprises. The adapted story became in effect a remake Bela's 1932 classic, *Murders in the Rue Morgue*. In both films, bodies are found in the river (the Seine in *Murders in the Rue Morgue*; the Thames in *Dark Eyes of London*), and evidence shows they are not simple drowning victims. Suspensions fall on a strange figure (the Lugosi characters – Dr. Mirakle and Orloff), but how he or anyone would have committed the crimes is a puzzle. An investigator falls in love with the likely next victim, and at last divines the fiend's accomplice (a trained ape; blind Jake – one of the dark eyes of the title). In the rousing finale, the police surround the doctor's lair, but not before the ape or Jake kills him first. The turncoat accomplices soon follow their masters to the grave.

The two films contain what are by far Bela's most brutal scenes on film. Mirakle's torture of a prostitute and Orloff's torture of a blind beggar are mercilessly short, but still jolt their audiences. The two films depart in their protagonists' motives. *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, filmed before the crush of censorship pressure and when moviemakers were still testing the limits of how far they dare go, is awash in sexual overtones. Mirakle abducts only women for his crazy experiments, and blames his failures on their promiscuity ("Your beauty is a lie," goes his famous line, "Your blood is rotten, black as your sins"). His plan to prove human evolution by injecting the blood of an ape into one of these hard-to-find virgins is a shallow metaphor for cross-species breeding. Orloff in *Dark Eyes of London* is only after loot. His victims, mostly men, are sacrificed not to science, but to his insurance scam. The script contains fleeting reference to Orloff's desperate mental state, but he is not nearly as insane as the dual villains of

Wallace's story, *Dark Eyes of London* fuses the two psychotic brothers of the novel into a single character masquerading in two identities. Thus, Bela plays a double role – Fodor Orloff and John Dearborn – until the finale reveals that they are actually the same person.

Dark Eyes of London came from one of the most unusual, unusual filmmakers in British cinema history. At 28, John Argyle already had more than 10 years experience making films, most of them for his own companies. He never had a big hit or classic – *Dark Eyes of London* would be as close as he ever came – but he dabbled in every type of film genre, and in most phases of film making. As a teenager, he worked as assistant cameraman at Gainsborough Films. By age 20, he was writing, directing and starring in his own independent productions. *Last Tide*, *Paradise Alley*, *Smiles*, *Along*, *Throughbred*, *Final Reckoning* and *Game of Chance* were all “quota quickies,” the low-budget movies made to fill British screens with enough domestic product to satisfy regulations. Argyle knocked them out for a few thousand pounds, and sold them to distributors for about £1,000 over his costs. By the mid-1930s, he had moved mainly into producing, but wrote or directed as the need or whim arose.

In 1935, on a budget of £2,000, Argyle filmed an archival documentary of some of Britain's most popular music hall acts. One comedy-singing team that greatly impressed him was Lucan & McShane. He strung together some of their skits into their feature film debut, and got backing from Butcher Films, Arthur Lucan & Kitty McShane had used various character names, their current ones were Mrs. O'Flynn and Noreen. Argyle did not like the sound of them. His scriptwriter, Con West, immediately sensed where the power and ego of Lucan & McShane lie, and named her character for her. Thus came into being Old Mother Riley and Her Daughter Kitty. *Old Mother Riley* premiered in August 1937. Loathed by the critics and ignored by the London theatre chains, it did fine business in the northern England. A year later came *Old Mother Riley In Paris*, which proved just as profitable. Lucan & McShane's success, on radio as well as stage and film, moved them out of Argyle's budget range. Working with Kitty McShane was not an experience many producers cared to repeat. Argyle left them to Butcher Films, and ploughed his share of the films' profits into his own company, Argyle British Productions. Seed money for *Dark Eyes of London* came, in effect, from *Old Mother Riley*. Perhaps as a subtle acknowledgement, comic relief in *Dark Eyes of London* is supplied by a character named “O'Reilly.”

Dark Eyes of London was more ambitious than anything Argyle had yet produced. Apart from Bela's salary, which is unknown but can be reasonably guessed at \$5,000 to \$10,000, the budget for the Edgar Wallace thriller would be £8,000 to £10,000. Argyle tacked about 20% on his total cost and sold the as-yet-unmade film to a distributor, Pathe Pictures. As his romantic lead, Argyle cast a boyish-looking Hugh

Williams as the Scotland Yard detective. Williams, 35, hoped to break out of the juvenile roles that still fit his appearance quite well. He had recently returned from Hollywood, where he played the unsufferable Hindley in *Wuthering Heights*. *Dark Eyes of London* would be Williams' last film before the success of *Wuthering Heights* made him a much hotter property. He is sufficiently believable as Inspector Holt, but his cherubic face stands as quite a contrast to the hard drinking, well-weathered movie detectives then favored in America.

Twenty-three year old leading lady Greta Gynt had five films to her credit. Her effervescent personality surfaced more in her own off-screen self-promotion than in her acting. Light comedy parts tended to denigrate her career; but she did much better in roles of substance. “Diana Stuart” is more than the obligatory blonde attacked by the monsters. The part calls for Gynt to identify her murdered father (as in *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, the heroine loses her only parent to the mad doctor's schemes) and to track down his killers. Gynt handles such scenes quite well, and *Dark Eyes of London* is arguably her best performance.

Argyle, like independent film producers everywhere, knew that top acting talent was always readily at hand via stage acts between engagements. They could be tapped for a few days work at relatively low day rates. The blind inmates of Dearborn's Home for the Destitute Blind are played by London-based actors who rarely appeared in films. Their parts are fleeting, but they make the most of their scant screen time. Arthur Owen, as “Dumb Lew,” Orloff's torture victim, cannot speak and even blink in his role, but gives all his moments on screen a haunting touch.

Most memorable is Wilfred Walter, as the deformed giant Jake. “Blind Jake” of Wallace's novel serves the mad doctor, but is no dupe. He rages against the sighted-world. Wallace's towering killer typically enters a victim's room and reaches to the ceiling to smash with his bare hands whatever light bulbs are overhead. The burns and cuts only fuel his violent revenge. The gamewack with the light bulbs remains in the film, but Walter reduces Jake to a half-wit. He is intensely loyal to Dumb Lew and Orloff, his clash of those loyalties dooms Orloff. Jake murders on command; yet the fierce anger that drives his crimes is never revealed. Early in the film, Jake reads a Braille message from Orloff – it is an instruction to kill Henry Stuart, but it triggers in Jake some barely-contained, undefined hatred. Jake controls himself only because he must tend to Dumb Lew. Beneath the grotesque make-up, which Walter designed himself, lie a classically trained actor and singer. He was the same age as Bela, and his early career in London parallels Bela's in Budapest. Walter did many seasons at the Old Vic in Shakespearean and operatic repertory. He made a sonorous Othello and a rugged Marc Antony; and London productions of *Hamlet* in the early 1920s often featured him as Claudius. For the Vic's opera productions, Walter designed sets, and sang in the

choruses. After the Old Vic, Walter ranged over Britain as actor, writer and singer, and toured America. His voice training shows in *Dark Eyes of London*: no viewer who sees Jake's final confrontation with Orloff soon forgets the heart-break and fury in the simple line, “You... killed...Lew!” As in many of Bela's horror films, both Lugosi the actor and the fiend he portrays have real competition from the poor slave who in the end turns on his master.

For *Dark Eyes of London's* director, Argyle tapped one of the grand old men of British cinema, though Walter Summers was only 44. His first job in show business was as assistant stage manager in a travelling theatre troupe that included a very young Claude Rains. Summers entered in the film business around 1912, and became an assistant director just before World War I halted his career. By the 1920s he was a well-established screenwriter and after 1923 directed mostly his own scripts. “The Captain” – his rank in World War I that he continued using – was definitely of the old school. He spoke his mind, worked quickly and efficiently, and sometimes dressed the part of the director, with riding britches and boots, motoring cap, ascot and white gloves. For one of his films, *The Flying Fool*, Summer did a lot of his directing in fisherman's rubber waders. In the scenes with downed pilots floating in the North Sea, Summers stood waist deep in a water tank just outside camera range. *Dark Eyes of London* begins with similar images of Orloff's victims in the Thames. Most of Summers' resume is low budget action films. His one foray into bigger budgets, *A Royal Divorce*, a silent film about Napoleon and Josephine, had him and his crew on location shooting around France. The film did well, but the British studios could never long compete with Hollywood in turning out epics. Summers went back to quota quickies. In 1937, he collaborated with John Argyle on the script of *Mistery of the Elmore*. He and Argyle, with Patrick Kirwan, adapted Wallace's novel for their Lugosi film.

With a master of low-budget film making as producer, and a no-nonsense military commander directing, *Dark Eyes of London* sailed through production without incident or delay. British film crews often preferred working with American stars over their own countrymen. British stage actors, particularly the men, almost instinctively tried to upstage their co-stars. Upstaging was more harmless in the theatre than on a movie set, where camera set-ups would be blocked and unwanted shadows cast. The Americans were generally much better at following their chalk marks on the set. After eleven days of filming, Bela's scenes were completed and he returned to America. Two days before he wrapped up his week at Wehmy Studios, the Pavilion Theatre a few blocks away played the *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* double bill. Bela declined any invitation for a personal appearance at what was advertised as “The Thrill – Chills From the Century.” He did donate ten autographed photos to be distributed as door

For most of the crew, the only unusual experience in the making of *Dark Eyes of London* occurred as they drove to work. Captain Summers, as they called him, ran through the woods around Welwyn each morning, an odd sight in the age before jogging. His cameraman, Bryan Langley asked why "Getting fit for summer camp." "A camp for boy scouts?" asked Langley. "I'm getting in trim for summer camp with the RAFVR. I'm in the balloon section." Langley had no idea what Summers was talking about. "The Captain" told Langley about the impending war, but the cinematographer had no clue what war. Hostilities would not start for another six months; but the RAFVR – the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve – was already preparing. Part of their home defense plan was a balloon barrage around London to prevent attack planes from strafing the city.

Dark Eyes of London ends with Jake taking revenge on Orloff for killing Dumb Lew. Orloff shoots Jake, but the blind giant hurls him off a warehouse loading bay into the Thames. At low tide, the Thames is like quicksand, and the screaming Orloff slowly sinks beneath the ooze. The sequence was the most physically demanding of Lugosi's many death scenes. Not nearly so demanding on the actor as on the crew, none of who had ever tried to simulate quicksand.

The finale was filmed on the older of the Welwyn Studios' two sound stages. The original owner, British Instructional Films, built it to film nature documentaries, and had installed a 7' deep, 10x12' foot pit. While shooting on *Dark Eyes of London* progressed on the larger, newer stage, the Captain's troops transformed the pit into the muddy Thames for the film's climax. A warehouse wall and overhanging loading platform were built against one side, and teams shovelled cartload after cartload of farmyard muck into the pit. Add water and quicksand would result, or so Summers hoped. The edges of the tank were smothered with sand and river-side debris, green marine growth, a few rib-like plants and "a dead cat" (records are unclear whether the prop was actually a dead animal). When Bryan Langley framed the set in his lenses, he thought it looked very real.

As work on the pit advanced, suister tales spread on the main sound stage of how realistic the "quicksand" was. Its powers grew with each retelling. Workers allegedly slipped in, and only escaped by leaving their shoes and boots behind. Such was the suction of the concoction. Would whoever fell in during the shooting ever get out? The actors played little attention – of them, only Bela had to contend with the pit. The stuntman who would double for Bela cautiously inspected it, and insisted that one of the crew be lowered into the brew, while he watched and witnessed this monster firsthand. A chain was tied around the chest of the stand-in's stand-in, and he was lowered link by link into the tank and its quicksand. His feet, legs, hips and waist slid smoothly into the morass. Then, chest deep, he stopped descending. The chain continued to lower and went slack.

"Some idiot's left a table in the tank," grumbled the Captain, "shuffle around and find the edge of the table with your feet." The man on the limp chain walked the pit's perimeter, but found no edge. Mud had settled to the bottom of the tank and formed a solid mass four feet thick, leaving some three feet of slimy water above. Summers told his stuntman to take his fall into the now shallow tank, and make it look like he was sinking. The Captain demonstrated how a drowning man would flail his arms and legs before going under. The stuntman – his fears about the sucking monster dispelled – boldly jumped in. Summers and company completed the scene in a single take.

Next was Bela's turn. The 56-year-old actor eased into the tank, with orders to mimic the stuntman's thrashing in the muck. Without the momentum of a drop, Bela did not submerge at all. Someone in the crew whispered about the "Dead Sea effect": the muddy water was so dense that Bela would not sink. He tried to sit on the hardened mass below him, but his feet shot up like corks. Finally, weights were tied to his ankles, and Summers made the shot in close-up. Bela managed to submerge his head for the big moment, as the frantic Dr. Orloff disappears into the goo.

Fedor Orloff's harrowing demise caps Bela's studied and complex performance, deceptively so since a shallower villain would easily fit into the pace and the depth of the story. With proper time to prepare, an alumnus of the Hungarian National Theatre would naturally create a characterization brimming with mannerisms and nuances, subtle and unstable. On stage Bela usually had sufficient time to develop the type of performance dictated by his training. In the chaotic world of low budget moviemaking – tight schedules, limited rehearsals and retakes, and ongoing script changes – he often had little opportunity to bring a role to its full potential. If he had the script to *Dark Eyes of London* when he boarded the Queen Mary, it would have left the ship well worn and dog-eared, with many annotations scribbled in the margins.

Orloff's first appearance, in his office with a rather prosaic Henry Stuart, is a bit suggestive of Dracula's first meeting with Renfield (in the 1931 movie, not the play). Like Renfield, Stuart has come only to discuss business. Orloff, like Dracula, quickly dispenses with the mundane and moves onto a grander plan. And like the Count, he needs little excuse to launch into a mini-monologue:

"I wanted to devote my life to the healing of mankind. I wanted to be a doctor. But they got together, those narrow-minded prejudiced medical men, to see how they could ruin me! Brilliant but unbalanced – that was their verdict."

Holt later reveals that Orloff "would be a practicing physician today if a megalomaniac streak hadn't gotten him into trouble." Bela fills Orloff's lament with many gestures and changes of expression. He stands and moves around the room, rolls his head, rolls his eyes,

laughs and rants. Stuart is a bit dumbfounded. Orloff sends him off to visit Dearborn's home for the blind with the same ominous phrasing with which Dracula instructs Renfield that they "will be leaving to-morrow eve-ning." The moment works in *Dracula*, but is rather overplayed here. As in many of Bela's performances, his Orloff is least effective when called on to be mysterious. The atmosphere of a Castle Dracula is enhanced by Orloff's odd, anemic secretary. The unnamed secretary bears a marked resemblance to one of Dracula's wives in the 1931 film, and like them never speaks. She only stares blankly at her lord and master.

Orloff is more Jekyll and Hyde than Dracula. He leads a double or triple life, as Orloff the benevolent businessman, Orloff the master criminal and Dearborn the saintly keeper of the home for the blind. The different personas give Bela ample opportunities. He underplays with business-like efficiency his most shocking scene, wherein Orloff deafens Dumb Lew:

"We shall have to make another experiment... You have been very foolish, Lew. You have been writing on little bits of paper. The police have been here. They'll come back, Lew. They might ask you questions. You're blind and you can't speak. But you can hear, and that will never do."

A jolt of electricity to Lew's ears elicits a scream from the otherwise mute beggar. Orloff simply packs his medical bag and exits.

Bela does milk the grand finale, with the murder of Lew and the near murder of Diana, but again opts for the matter-of-fact instead of the melodramatic. As Orloff drowns Lew, he proudly explains to the startled Diana how his murders are committed, and punctuates the lesson with an undulating hand, illustrating how the tide carries his victims' bodies downstream. His body soon joins theirs.

Early in the film, Orloff is obviously struggling to keep his separate selves divided. A fascinating touch in the opening scenes, dropped as the film progresses, is that the businessman and Dearborn are right-handed and the criminal is left-handed. The transition occurs when Stuart leaves, and Orloff types out a message in Braille. The quaint device requires ambidexterity. The man who a few minutes before signed checks and blotted the ink with his right hand, now uses his left to toss the message to a blind accomplice, adjust his tie and nervously tap fingers. When Inspector Holt arrives on the first of his routine questionings about recent drownings, Orloff uncomfortably slips into one of his other selves. Later scenes abandon the gimmick, but it re-emerges in the finale when the police trap Orloff in the home for the blind. He is shot in the right arm. As he flees, it dangles at his side. Jake corners him. Orloff's only hope is to become Dearborn (Jake can distinguish them only by their voices). With his right side crippled, the madman can only summon his sinister self to scream "I am Orloff! I am Orloff!" Jake finishes him off before he himself dies.

Bela does well in the Dearborn character.

but the make-up and dark glasses (Dearborn, like his flock, is allegedly blind) just barely mask his distinctive profile, and his nose gives the nose away. He could never hide his accent, and Dearborn's voice is dubbed by character actor O. B. Clarence. Clarence receives no billing in *Dark Eyes of London*. In his later years, Clarence specialized in portraying clerics. Argyle hired the 69-year-old actor directly after a stint in the West End as one of Joan of Arc's inquisitors. He lends a pearly to Dearborn, and the dubbing works well enough. Dearborn's walrus moustache all but hides his mouth, and makes matching the lips movements no problem.

Dark Eyes of London is the only Walter Summers movie available to the general public today, and the fast-paced, atmospheric movie is a testament to his craftsmanship. His directorial talents are needed, for his script of *Dark Eyes of London* fits uncomfortably between horror (whose key is anticipation of the dreaded) and mystery (wherein keeping the audience guessing and engaged is paramount). Weaknesses in the story construction leave *Dark Eyes of London* something less than the sum of its parts. Orloff is revealed as the villain only a few minutes into the film, and only the most idle viewer fails to realize early on that Dearborn and Orloff are one. Scotland Yard takes a long time to solve a very obvious mystery. Summers makes their work exciting, with rapid cutting between the different phases of criminal investigation. Summers and Argyle load these scenes with grisly images. A giant image of Henry Stuart's drowned body is projected on the evidence room wall for Holt to inspect minutely. The corner casually describes the mucous secretions typical of drowning victims. As Holt and the corner discuss the analysis of the victim's stomach contents, another autopsy is conducted in the background.

For the careful viewer and connoisseur of mysteries, *Dark Eyes of London* is filled with plot inconsistencies. Insurance underwriters, for example, are complaining about the huge payouts on recent drowning victims, but somehow no one knows who issues the policies. Summer storms over the story shortcomings, and keeps the crime-solving scenes moving at an ever-increasing pace. He does pause to work in some neat touches. Holt's opening appearance ends with him ordering tea; he is smarting from a tongue lashing from his boss and battling a jammed clock drawer. Orloff's introduction ends with him savoring a liqueur under the watchful stare of that odd secretary, and convinced that the police are too stupid to catch him.

Not much imagination goes into the filming of the early scenes, which are mostly straight camera set-ups punctuated with a few close-ups. Summers may be lulling the viewer so as to accentuate the shocks to come. Orloff's violent reaction to learning that Henry Stuart has a daughter (thereby threatening his insurance scam) is an arresting moment, and a harbinger of the carefully constructed scene to follow. Orloff benignly leads to Stuart through the blind home. From the dark hallway, he opens

the door on the brightly lit infirmary. The viewer, like Stuart, must adjust to the change in brightness, and slowly grasp that Jake awaits him, straitjacketed at the ready, beside a large tank of water. The sudden contrast in lighting affects blind Jake not at all. Orloff slams the door shut; a scream accompanies the fade-out.

The rapid pace does not compromise the atmospherics. Ominous shadows fall in almost every scene. The detailed, cluttered sets create a claustrophobic feeling. The pace and the feel culminate in the finest sequence in the film, Jake's attack on Diana. Jake's nocturnal talents have already been shown in his murder of Orloff's accomplice in another scene transition from total darkness to bright light. Jake stalks Diana to her flat. She is saved by the timely arrival of Holt, but not before their struggle transpires every room in the apartment, every shading of light and dark. In the finale, Jake has a second chance at Diana at the blind home, but she gasps out that Lew is dead, and Jake turns on Orloff.

As with many a Lugosi villain, Orloff is brought down not by his enemies but by his own arrogance. Long before Scotland Yard closes in, he knows that he is their chief suspect; but continues his crimes, confident that he can outwit them. Holt knows Orloff is in league with the forger Grogan (key to his insurance scam), and that the last victim visited the blind home that he supports. Even as the police watch his every move, Orloff files on the last insurance claims. The claims trigger the call for his arrest. A nation-wide wide manhunt follows. He can escape in his yacht, but hides behind his Dearborn persona only for revenge against Dumb Lew and Diana. That Jake might rebel on losing his only friend and human contact never occurs to him.

Some inconsistencies in *Dark Eyes of London* may be due to editing. Henry Stuart somehow knows Dumb Lew before they ever meet. Later, Lew is suffering terribly from an experimental injection from Orloff, though why or how it is administered is never disclosed. Late editing may well have been performed to satisfy some censors or to trim the overall length for a double bill. As with *Mystery of the Mary Celeste*, perhaps only the reviewers at the October 1939 trade show premiere ever saw the movie in its original form. All were enthusiastic; all warned that the H-rating was fully deserved. In its first few feet of film, *Dark Eyes of London* boldly proclaims its intentions. The opening title replaces the dead, unseeing eyes as the well-known cover illustration for Wallace's novel with Lugosi's piercing gaze. The credits fade immediately into a procession of drowned bodies.

To-Day's Cinema complained of the "murderous assaults of a blind and hideously deformed killer, and the deliberate and cold-blooded drowning of a helpless blind deaf-mute in the sight of a bound girl," but reluctantly concluded that as adult entertainment, the movie was very good. "Bela Lugosi does not miss the sinister opportunities," it commented, "but is never freakishly bizarre; he leaves that to

Wilfred Walter." *The Daily Film Renter* found *Dark Eyes of London* "an ideal vehicle for Bela Lugosi...There are deft thrills and chills in the picture, yielded mainly by the deformed monster...The climax, too, at which the monster turns the table acting his master, is timed to yield the right suspense, with the fate of the girl undecided to the last." "Spectacular thriller" thought *Kinematograph Weekly*; "superb grand guignol workmanship is guaranteed by first-rate acting and resourceful and showmanlike direction."

Dark Eyes of London reached America in early 1940, re-titled *The Human Monster*. The grand guignol was either ridiculed or attacked. "Our personal reaction," wrote the reviewer for *The New York Times*, "was more hysterical than horrified." The US National Motion Picture League denounced the film, and its list of objections reads like a summary of the entire plot—the League found every scene offensive. Monogram, soon to become Bela's principal employer in Hollywood, released the film in the United States with the catch phrase:

"If you are weak, don't come For the strong only."

Censors' ratings and reformers' disapprovals, once seen as keeping audiences away, were heralded by 1939 almost as product endorsements. *The Kinematograph Weekly* ends its review of *Dark Eyes of London* with a clear indication that a new age had dawned on the content and marketing of horror films:

"There are no half-measures with this picture and nothing is left to the imagination. Cold-blooded murder is witnessed in practically every reel, and each crime is a stepping-stone to bigger and more breath-taking thrills...The 'H' certificate is certainly not lightly earned, nor should it prove a handicap."

Real horrors too had changed. Some 1930s mad doctor epics are eerie warnings of the Nazi regime. Many social commentators have noted that what Hollywood made into mass entertainment, the Third Reich made into mass murder. In *Dark Eyes of London*, a megalomaniac of suspicious origins collects society's handicapped into his private world. He exploits them, experiments on them and kills them at will. When the forces of good at last charge in, he releases poison gas on the inmates to cover his escape. As Orloff sinks to the bottom of the Thames, Holt pronounces the dead fiend's eulogy:

"He deserves no pity. When a dog goes mad, he has to be destroyed."

If Bela had seen in *Dark Eyes of London* a forerunner of the true horrors to come, he probably would not have objected. Later in 1939, he echoed Inspector Holt's comments as he spoke of the Nazis: "You cannot love those barbarians," he told the New York-based Hungarian-American newspaper, *Ar Ember*, "you can only hate them." Bela weaved at length:

"Seeing all the horrors overseas, we have to stick to this country fanatically. Here we can live

CONT'D. ON PAGE 66

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Dark Eyes of London

CONT'D. FROM PAGE 63

in human peace and love while over there countries disappear overnight. After what Adolf Hitler has recently done to the people of Czechoslovakia, I wonder if there is still an American of Hungarian descent who can nurture anything but hate for the Nazis. The lie about liberation has been revealed, and honest people point fingers at Herr Hitler, the land robber and conqueror of nations...We are in constant fear what if our unfortunate old motherland with her battered people comes next?"

World War II indirectly created sustained demand for Bela's services. He stayed fully employed, though rarely satisfied with the roles offered him. Some of his and others' horror movies of the war years can be viewed as absurdist parodies of the Nazi leaders' demented gestures in a mad grab for power or out to prove some crazy theory, oblivious to, even enjoying, the suffering and death they cause.

"Mad doctors" have always been part of the horror genre, but in the 1940s movie horror shifted ever further from the gothic classics that dominated it in the 1930s. Universal's movie monsters - Dracula, Frankenstein's Monster, the Wolf Man, the Mummy - are serial killers driven by incomprehensible forces, but retaining enough humanity to fascinate and repel. The mad doctors that came to dominate the 1940s are perverse sociopaths, masking their fanatical schemes behind dedication to some higher purpose, usually "science." They owe much to the fifth of the Universal pantheon, The Invisible Man, who alone among the classic monsters kills at will and as he alone chooses. His story is closest to what modern viewers might recognize as science fiction. The birth of the science fiction film genre is a decade ahead, but the shifting emphasis of the monster movie protagonists signalled its arrival and the eclipse of gothic horror.

In the 1940s, no one appreciated the parallels of Bela's poverty row epics to European politics - just as well since the legions of young boys who attended his films rooted for him, not the good guys. Lugosi's 1940s horror movies are simple good-vs-evil tales; but his unique star power made them studies in the seductive power of evil. Bela seduced a generation of young boys for a few afternoons of innocent fun. Hitler seduced a nation for a holocaust. The link between mass entertainment and mass murder is not so far-fetched.

By the time the last of the Nazis was dead or captured or hunted into exile, "Bela Lugosi" was synonymous with the low-brow movies distinctly out of step with the post-war era. Bela was cooled as well. His attempts to carve a livelihood out of the suffocating stereotype eventually led him to Britain in search of a comeback.

And in November 1951, to the griefs of Netflix Studios to film Renown's *Mother Riley Meets The Vampire*. ■

This essay completes the extracts from *Vampire Over London* - Bela Lugosi in Britain that will be reprinted by Cult Movies. Though we have reprinted a great deal from the book in our magazine, much more is available only in the book. To purchase a copy, or a copy of Frank Della Strato's new book, *A Quaint & Curious Volume of Forgotten Lore - The Mythology & History*

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